

SINGULAR
MISS SMITH
F. KINGSTON

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"'ANNE,' HE SAID, 'I MUST TELL YOU SOMETHING.'"

THE SINGULAR MISS SMITH

BY

FLORENCE MORSE KINGSLEY

AUTHOR OF "TITUS," "STEPHEN," "THE NEEDLE'S EYE,"

"THE TRANSFIGURATION OF MISS PHILURA,"

ETC., ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY WILL GREFÉ

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THE SINGULAR MISS SMITH

CHAPTER I

THE president of the Ontological Club tapped for order, her eyes behind their gold-mounted glasses dwelling blandly on the animated scene before her. "Our dear women are manifesting a really unprecedented interest in this our first sociological study of the season," she murmured in the ear of Dr. Aurilla Robinson-Cobb, who occupied the seat of honor at her right hand.

Dr. Robinson-Cobb elevated her brows tentatively. "The question may be justly considered a vital one, as causally related to the Cosmos and to the individual," she replied in a rumbling voice suggestive of abysmal depths of wisdom.

Dr. Robinson-Cobb — to use her own lucid phrase — had, in the process of her unfoldment, reached a plane above and beyond that occupied by the generality of female clubs. And while, of course, she understood perfectly that there is

no sex in mind, she was inclined to prefer (as an audience) that manifestation of mind which sees fit to array itself in trousers.

The subject of the afternoon, as announced by the secretary of the Club, a well-developed lady who appeared to be hermetically sealed in a lavender broadcloth gown, was an eminently practical question: "Why do American women of the laboring class decline, as a rule, to enter domestic service?"

As intimately correlated to the question Dr. Aurilla Robinson-Cobb had been persuaded to deliver before the Ontological Club her celebrated lecture on "The primal relation of Woman to the evolution of the Cosmos." The number of multisyllabled words employed by the lecturer in the course of her address was gratifyingly large. When at last she took her seat, the Ontological Club, as a body, heaved a furtive sigh of gratitude and exhaustion; individually they exchanged hypocritical whispers to the effect that they had enjoyed an inestimable privilege.

The lecturer, pleasantly conscious of having created a sensation, leaned back in her chair, eying

the Club with the air of a learned professor maturingly obliged to steel himself against the crass stupidity of his pupils. The "general discussion" had been announced and was about to begin.

There was a short period of silence, during which the president assured Dr. Robinson-Cobb, *sotto voce*, that our dear women were *so* appreciative; she felt sure that they had been awed into silence by the lofty ideas presented in the course of the lecture.

Dr. Robinson-Cobb compressed her lips, but it was evident that this idea was not wholly displeasing; she therefore consciously relaxed her mental attitude with immediate results. A small lady, wearing very large, luminous spectacles, which seemed to point to a corresponding development of brain structure, arose and begged leave to address the assemblage. It became subsequently evident that in the opinion of the small lady with spectacles American women of the laboring class would gladly lend themselves to the uplifting influence of the more illumined individuals, who formed the so-called upper classes, if they could be induced to realize their primal relation-

ship to the Cosmos. The proper and indeed the only plane of life on which this necessary realization could be accomplished was manifestly the plane of domestic labor. The American kitchen should be — must be — eagerly sought by the laboring woman, as the arena in which to develop the germ of the psychic existence. She warmly recommended, as a practical measure, that the eloquent and convincing address of the afternoon presented by Dr. Aurilla Robinson-Cobb should be published at the expense of the Ontological Club, and that a copy should be placed in the outstretched hand of the American laboring woman.

She gracefully quoted in closing that weighty saying of Emerson's, "We are used as brute atoms until we think, then we use all the rest." The large glasses seemed positively to emit rays of wisdom as their wearer triumphantly enunciated: —

"As thinkers, elevated upon the mountain heights of inspiration, women of the Ontological Club, it is our manifest duty to use the brute atom — to conform it to our higher needs. Let

us then seize the psychic instant, and mould into sentient beauty this our part of the eternal macrocosm !”

A subdued rustle of silk-lined garments, a buzz of whispered exclamations, and a reverential elevation of lorgnettes greeted this burst of eloquence. Even the great Dr. Robinson-Cobb was seen to be visibly moved. She frowned judicially, ahemed in a masculine manner, and nodded thrice.

It was at this psychic instant that our story really begins. “Ladies”—the president of the Ontological Club was speaking with that unctuous tranquillity which marked her every action — “the Chair cannot forbear voicing the very general gratification in view of the elevated trend which our discussion has taken. As I have often declared from this platform, one cannot too often subject one’s entire being to the direct rays of Truth. After listening to the inspirational utterances of the afternoon, I feel that I for one cannot help advancing to a higher plane of thought than I have yet occupied. We have still remaining twenty precious minutes; if there

is any one present who can add to what has been said, we shall be glad to listen now [a thrilling pause]. If not, we will attend to the reading of the notices, after which I trust that every member of the Club will remain for an hour of social communion with the distinguished guest of the afternoon, Dr. Aurilla Robinson-Cobb. Ah, Miss Smith! Ladies, Miss Smith has the floor."

Fifty pairs of eyes followed the august motion of the presiding officer's head and became fixed with mingled curiosity and disapproval upon the tall slender figure of a young woman who had risen in the centre of the room. She began slowly, almost appealingly. "The question of the afternoon is 'Why do American women of the laboring class decline, as a rule, to enter domestic service?' We have been told that it is because they do not realize their primal relationship to the Cosmos. Perhaps this is true, if we could possibly understand what the Cosmos is, and what we ourselves are. I confess that I do not understand either."

An eager stir pervaded the assemblage. The small lady with the luminous spectacles, in par-

ticular, seemed almost unable to keep her seat. Miss Smith continued: "I have made full notes of several lectures to which I have listened in this room, describing the Cosmos in detail, and defining ourselves as 'spiritual entities,' 'centres of energy,' 'individualized mind,' 'rays of truth,' and so on; but in spite of it all, I am quite sure I have so far failed to realize my primal relationship to my kitchen, to say nothing of the rest of the Cosmos.

"I fear I am speaking very bluntly, and I am sure you think me very stupid; but I have often heard here that Mind is ageless and knows no limit, so I hope you will forgive me for saying just what I think, though I am so much younger than the other members of the Club."

A rustle of ill-concealed indignation followed this unlucky phrase. Mrs. J. Mortimer Van Deuser, a portly lady of majestic demeanor, was heard to murmur that the girl was "really impossible."

"Why," urged Miss Smith, her gray eyes fixed earnestly on the dismayed president of the Ontological Club, "do we not ask the laboring women

this question, instead of talking among ourselves about the Cosmos, which I am sure they never even heard of? They must have good reasons for not liking to work in our homes instead of stifling in those dreadful sweat-shops and factories, where they are obliged to work much harder. If they would tell us just what they do not like about domestic service, could we not remedy the condition and make our homes pleasant places in which to work?"

The young woman paused, as if waiting for an answer to this question, and the lady with the luminous spectacles begged, caustically, to be allowed to ask the speaker a question. "Will Miss Smith be so very kind as to suggest a method by which the Ontological Club may bring about this happy result? To put it plainly, are we to invite our cooks, housemaids, and factory girls to attend a session of the Ontological Club and discuss the question on the open floor?"

A wave of whispered protest swept over the room, to subside at a gentle reminder from the Chair. "Ladies, I beg to remind you that Miss Smith has the floor!"

That young lady was regarding the luminous spectacles with a puzzled expression. "I think," she said slowly, "that the suggestion is a very good one, if they—I mean the cooks and factory girls—could possibly be honest here." After which she sat down, feeling vaguely sore and discomfited.

During the social hour which followed, Miss Smith found herself the object of much curious attention on the part of numbers of full-fed elderly ladies who regarded her dubiously from strongly intrenched positions behind their tea-cups. At length Mrs. J. Mortimer Van Deuser was seen to bear down on the young person like a deep-freighted galleon under full sail. "My dear Miss Smith," she said sonorously, "do you realize that you are really quite the sensation of the afternoon? I am sure we all desire nothing more devoutly than to make a wise use of those powers developed in the higher phases of human experience. But you must allow one wiser in this world's knowledge than you seem to be, my love, to tell you that we cannot hope to treat with the laboring classes on our own plane of

thought. To use Dr. Robinson-Cobb's beautiful simile, we who have become individualized centres of power — suns — in the mighty mazes of the Cosmos must not only illumine but control the blind atoms which circle about us in æonian darkness. Of *course* after ages of evolution gained through countless reincarnations the unintelligent beings who compose the masses *may* gain the heights we now occupy. But at present, believe me, my dear child, it is really a mistaken — indeed I may say an ignorant kindness — if such a contradiction in terms may be permitted in metaphysics — to attempt to elevate the masses."

"I am sure I never thought of trying to elevate the masses," said Miss Smith, simply; "but I should like to help poor girls who need it."

Mrs. Van Deuser sighed deeply, then her face lighted up. She lifted her lorgnette and studied the candid young face before her. "My dear child," she ejaculated with feeling, "this is really providential. You know I am president of the board of managers of the Protestant Evangelical Refuge for aged, indigent, and immoral females.

The needs of this excellent institution are very great at present. I shall be delighted to add you to our Committee on Ways and Means."

The girl shook her head. "I tried being on a board of managers once," she said decidedly. "I didn't like it. And"—her young face flushing brightly—"I couldn't talk to those dreadful women, I am sure. I should like to help to keep them from being dreadful. It seems so much more sensible, don't you think it does?"

Mrs. Van Deuser drew herself up for an instant and stared hard at the misguided young person, as she mentally termed Miss Smith. Then her face wreathed itself in a forgiving smile. "My *dear, dear* child," she murmured. "You are *so* like your father!"

"Thank you," said Anne Smith.

CHAPTER II

THE story of Anne Elizabeth Smith, previous to the psychic instant before mentioned, was sufficiently commonplace. Her mother, never more than a vague though passionately loved memory, was associated chiefly with the miniature of a sweet-faced, smiling woman, worn always at her neck. At uncertain intervals her father, a big, silent man, would ascend to the prim nursery on the third floor, and, setting his motherless daughter on his big knee, regard her attentively, kiss her solemnly, and talk to her briefly in a deep, rumbling voice.

These memorable occasions meant even more to Anne than the miniature. Little passed in the way of words between the silent child and the silent man. A curious housemaid once surveyed the scene through a convenient keyhole. "Missy had been goin' on somethin' fierce that afternoon," said this individual, when reporting her experience

to a fellow-servant. "Nurse told her as how she'd ought to be 'shamed of herself 'cause her angel ma was a-watchin' of her from heaven every minute. 'You're a person that tells lies,' says Missy; 'an' you'll have your part with dogs and sorcerers. It says so in the Bible. My mamma *never* looks down on this nursery. If she did, she couldn't keep from crying 'cause I'm so lonesome, and you know well enough that people don't cry in heaven.'

"'I guess I'll have to call your Aunt Nugent,' says nurse. 'An' I don't care if you call fifty Aunt Nugents,' says Missy. With that she up and smashes her best doll on the fender—the one her aunt give her for Christmas—and stamps on the pieces. Nurse was that afraid of her that she sent me to call Mis' Nugent, an' *she* come an' took off her ma's picture for a punishment. You could have heard Missy scream in the basement. Just then in comes her pa, quiet and unexpected-like, and turns us all out. 'I do *hope*,' says Mrs. Nugent, almost a-cryin', 'that you'll punish this naughty, naughty child as she deserves.' 'I will,' he says, and takes the picture

from her an' hangs it back on Missy's neck. After that they set down, the two of 'em, afore the fire, not sayin' a word as I could hear. The next day Master give his orders that nobody was ever to touch the picture of Missy's mother again."

Subsequent interviews were not reported. They ceased altogether when Anne was fourteen. If the girl mourned the event which orphaned her, no one in the big gloomy house was the wiser for it. Mrs. Nugent, the distant relative on her mother's side, who had supposedly filled the maternal hiatus in the past, dutifully shed tears enough for two while complacently adjusting herself to her new and handsome mourning toilets, and the certainty of a comfortable future assured her by the provisions of the dead man's last will and testament.

Mrs. Nugent was a mild, billowy person, whose desires and ambitions were distinctly circumscribed by a cushioned chair, a silk gown of superior texture, a warm knitted shawl, a sweet, sad love story, and the tender breast of a young chicken properly cooked. She had always sup-

posed herself to be permeated with the fondest maternal feelings for her young charge, and cherished a vague purpose of doing her duty by the child under all circumstances, however trying. She was an extremely religious woman of the variety which delights in devotional books of a sentimentally theological turn, and she piously thanked the Deity for all his many blessings, temporal and spiritual, with the most praiseworthy regularity.

Of the black-haired, gray-eyed girl, who was the more immediate source of the blessings in question, Mrs. Nugent was by this time quite frankly afraid. On the evening of the funeral as the two sat together before the fire, certain uneasy stirrings in that portion of her comfortable structure set apart by the excellent Mrs. Nugent for the exclusive use of conscience informed her the time had come for a serious talk with the girl. "My dearest Annchen," she began accordingly, "the lawyers will have told you that you are a very rich girl." The good woman paused tentatively, but as Anne made no reply, she proceeded in her gentle minor

staccato. "I had no idea that your poor dear papa was so wealthy a man. It will place a great responsibility on your young shoulders, my dear,—not that you will have the control of the property yet, of course; but it all comes to you when you are eighteen—much too young, I should have said, had your poor father consulted me, which he seldom did. I do hope, my dear Annchen, that you will remember quite particularly to kneel down every night by your bedside and repeat your prayers. I have ordered Jane to carry my best copy of 'Dr. Pilkington's Evening Reflections' to your room. Do read in it regularly, my child. I shall feel far safer and more comfortable about your future if you promise me that much."

"I should like you to feel comfortable, Aunt Nugent," said the girl, coldly. "But please don't call me Annchen again."

Mrs. Nugent's pink-lidded eyes drooped confusedly. "Your father sometimes called you Annchen," she faltered. "I hoped—I thought —"

Anne waited a dutiful length of time for the

lady to finish her sentence, then she said quietly: "You thought I would like you to call me what father did; but you are mistaken. Thank you for the book, Aunt Nugent; if it will make you any happier I will read it. I think you are the only person in the world who cares at all what I do."

"Oh, no, my dear," twittered Mrs. Nugent, quite appeased; "there are the lawyers, you know, and the clergyman and his wife, and, oh, ever so many persons. With all your papa's money you will be quite an important person some day. And if you remember to repeat your prayers and to read dear Dr. Pilkington regularly, I am sure you will grow up quite as you should."

Their subsequent intercourse never again fell into so intimate and personal a tone. The matter of the prayers was somehow definitely dropped then and there. And try as she might, Mrs. Nugent had not been able to steer the conversation on to the subject of "Dr. Pilkington's Evening Reflections." "I really must do my duty by the child," she told herself for the

thousandth time, and despatched her maid with an attractive blue-and-gold copy of "Sermons to the Young," for Miss Anne's table. Luckily Mrs. Nugent had been led in her youth to place sincere confidence in what she was pleased to term "silent influence," and inasmuch as the exercise of this potent function in no way interfered with the placid consumption of food and fiction, she found it on the whole the most convenient and desirable way of dealing with her young charge.

Anne Smith therefore pursued the tenor of her way with little active interference from without. She chose her own school and attended it regularly, exhibiting a surprising mixture of docility and stubbornness in her relations with her teachers, which led them to label her rather dubiously as "a girl of character." Subsequently she graduated from a prominent university where she attracted the least possible attention. Her work was always well though not brilliantly performed; for the rest she was simply a silent, observant on-looker, attracting few acquaintances and no real friends.

She realized this with a sickening shock on the day of her graduation, as she stared with frowning eyes at two costly baskets of flowers sent respectively by Mrs. Nugent and the firm of lawyers who managed the estate. "I am — different — some way," she told herself.

Mrs. Nugent was surprised and delighted with the more immediate effects of the higher education on her young charge, who now took her place as mistress of the great Smith mansion on Beacon Street.

"This house seems dull and gloomy, aunt," said Miss Anne, on the day after her home-coming. "What can we do to make it look more like other people's houses?"

Mrs. Nugent sank into her favorite arm-chair before replying. "The house is very well furnished, my dear," she said plaintively, "and I have always found it very comfortable. I have kept it as nearly as possible just as your dear father and mother arranged it thirty-five years ago."

Anne Smith's brows contracted. "I shall not interfere with father's library — nor with your

rooms," she said; "but I mean to make the rest of the place different."

The general renovation and refurnishing which followed completely absorbed the young mistress of the house for several months. "Now I am going to have a party," she announced abruptly, when all was finished.

"A party?" echoed Mrs. Nugent, weakly. "Why, of course, how thoughtless of me! I have grown so accustomed to thinking you quite different from other girls, my love, that it never occurred to me that you— A coming-out party, of course. But I know so few people, my dear,—socially, I mean. You know, I have not been going out of late. How shall we manage?"

"We shall manage very well," said Anne, calmly. "I have asked Mrs. Taunton to give the invitations. The decorators and caterers will do the rest."

The party was said to be a success. A great many people came. "Quite the best people, too," observed Mrs. Nugent, complacently. The flowers were superb, the music excellent, and the supper

room lavish in its appointments. Anne Smith stood slim and tall in her white dress between her two chaperons and received her guests. She smiled determinedly on everybody while gripping her bouquet in an agony of shyness.

"I will *not* be different!" she told herself in her own room when everything was at last over. "Oh, *mother — mother — mother!*" A bit of painted ivory is a poor substitute for a living mother; but this particular fragment might well have been living by this time, so long had it lain over the girl's passionate heart.

The firm determination to be like other girls carried her through two seasons. Society received her, if not exactly with open arms, at least with complaisance. Was she not a Smith of *the* Smiths, and did she not represent a solid power which the world has never yet despised? It was said of her at this time by divers individuals of judgment and discrimination, that while Anne Smith was not in the least beautiful, nor even pretty, she possessed a decided distinction of face and manner; that her gray eyes were undoubtedly her best feature, but it was a pity she had con-

tracted the habit of appearing to look one through clear to the spinal column. "It was enough to give one the shivers, don't you know!" That she was too highly educated ever to be a society success; that she was utterly lacking in *savoir faire* — and finally — a damning word — that she was so "different" from other girls that she frightened the men.

Poor Anne! All these carping voices reached her inner consciousness with that unerring distinctness upon which scientific persons are actually beginning to count. "I am different," she at last confessed to the miniature. "And I can't help it." This after a ball, where she had spent the greater part of the evening trying to talk brightly to the elderly ladies and gentlemen who fringed the scene like the sober calyx of a gay blossom.

"Why are n't you dancing, my dear?" demanded a friend of her father's.

"Because nobody asked me," said honest Anne.

"Nobody asked you! Gad! what are our young men thinking of? If I was a bit younger,

I'd show 'em what a man of taste and sense ought to do without being told. Yes, by George, I would!"

In a subsequent interview with his son, this indiscreet old gentleman still further endeavored to champion poor Anne's cause. "Do you know, young fellow, what that girl is worth in solid millions?" he demanded excitedly.

"Money is n't everything," quoth the sapient young man.

"Who said it was, sir?" thundered his father. "The girl has brains and education, and she's handsomer by half than that pink-faced chit you've been hanging about this winter."

"Do you mean that you want me to marry Anne Smith?"

"And if I do, why not, sir, I should like to know?"

"There is no reason at all, sir, except that I'm going to marry the pink-faced chit! I prefer 'chits' to icebergs, myself."

Anne Smith was the very antipode of an iceberg; but how was the ordinary young man, poorly furnished with intuitional faculties, to find this out?

It was shortly after this, in a fit of sheer desperation, that she joined the Ontological Club, and began to attend Monday lectures and Tuesday classes and Thursday sewing circles. About this time also the treasurers of various charitable boards and church benevolences began to receive large anonymous contributions. And all this brings us quite naturally to the hour when Anne Smith came home from the meeting of the Ontological Club, still feeling vaguely sore and discomfited.

There was a pasteboard box in her room when she entered it in the glowing winter twilight. The maid called her mistress's attention to it as she removed her wraps, and lingered to stir the fire to a brighter glow. "The letter came with it, Miss Smith," said the girl, glancing curiously at her young lady who received so few letters and damp boxes bearing florists' names.

"I will look at it presently," said Anne, absent-mindedly. "You are an American, are you not, Lizzie?"

"No, indeed, ma'am, I'm English," said the girl, proudly. "I was born in America, to be sure, but I don't count that, miss."

"You don't wish to count it, you mean," continued Anne, smiling faintly. "Are you quite happy here? I mean, do you like being out at service?"

The girl blushed. "I'm sure you've always been that kind to me, Miss Smith, I've nothin' to complain of."

"I've tried to be kind," said Anne, seriously, "but that is n't answering my question. Do you like the work you are doing in my house, Lizzie? I wish you would be quite frank with me."

"I would n't be denyin' that everybody has their own troubles off and on, miss," said the girl, vaguely; "but they ain't wuth the tellin', an' I'm as contented as most." With that she closed the door softly behind her, leaving her mistress to the contemplation of the pasteboard box and the thick square letter directed to Miss Anne Elizabeth Smith in a bold, masculine hand.

The box contained roses, long-stemmed, heavy-headed pink roses, emitting a delicious musky odor and half smothered in fern. The girl experienced a genuine throb of pleasure as she

bent over them. "Who could have sent them to me?" she murmured.

The question was answered by the narrow strip of pasteboard which had modestly hidden itself behind a half-opened bud. "Rev. Frederick Galatin," she read, and wondered. She wondered still more when she opened the letter and found the same name signed to its four closely written pages.

Half an hour later, when Mrs. Nugent, in quite a pretty flutter of cap-ribbons and maternal agitation, knocked at her niece's door, she was admitted without hesitation.

"Oh, *may* I come in, my love?" chirruped Mrs. Nugent, excitedly. "Of course I would n't intrude for the world—at a sacred moment like this, you know, but really, my dear, it came over me all in a moment just how you must be feeling, and I could n't help—"

Anne looked down on the small billowy person of her relative with unfeigned surprise. "I can't think what you are talking about, Aunt Nugent," she said, calmly folding and returning the letter to its envelope.



"SO DR. GALLETTIN TOLD YOU THAT HE MEANT TO ASK ME TO
MARRY HIM?"

"Oh, you shy, naughty girl!" cried Mrs. Nugent, with a playful gesture of triumph. "Pray don't think you can conceal anything from me! Dear Dr. Gallatin was here this afternoon and we had a long, long, confidential talk." Mrs. Nugent's voice dropped to a solemn monotone with her concluding words. "My dear child, that man is an angel, and you are a happy woman."

Anne Smith drew her delicate black brows together. "So Dr. Gallatin told you that he meant to ask me to marry him?" she said coldly.

"He asked my advice and my permission, certainly, my dear," said Mrs. Nugent, clutching vainly after her vanishing composure. "That was quite proper, don't you feel it so, my dear?"

"Perhaps it was," said Anne, staring moodily into the glowing heart of the fire. "Do you advise me to marry him, Aunt Nugent?"

"Oh, my *dear*, how can you put it so coldly?" exclaimed Mrs. Nugent, excitedly. "My prayers for you are *all* going to be answered. I'm sure I had n't *hoped* for such a blessing. As I told *dear* Dr. Gallatin, I feel sure this is a direct leading of Providence, and to think that *I* may have

been the humble instrument in the hands of a Higher Power."

"Then you do advise me to marry him?" persisted Anne, looking curiously at the carefully powdered, flaccid curves of Mrs. Nugent's face. "Why do you advise it?"

"I certainly do, my dear. You are so *different* from other girls. You know you are, dear child, you are so dignified, so calm, so self-restrained. And then your *money*. Only think of the good you can do in your husband's parish!"

"Dr. Gallatin mentioned in his argument all the reasons you have named except the money," said Anne, smiling faintly. "Perhaps he forgot that."

"Oh, no, my dear, he asked me quite particularly as to the terms of the will. But there, I ought not to have said that, I am sure. I am always saying the wrong thing." Mrs. Nugent turned quite pale with apprehension as she glanced appealingly at the girl's gloomy face.

"It does n't matter in the least, Aunt Nugent; I have n't thought of such a thing as marrying Dr. Gallatin."

“Oh, my dear, *why?*” besought Mrs. Nugent, tearfully. “Don’t be hasty, I beg of you, my love; you might never have another such opportunity; you are so different from—”

Anne Smith laughed aloud in a mirthless fashion. “I ought to know by this time that I am different,” she said bitterly. “But I will not on that account marry a man old enough to be my father, who does not even pretend to love me.”

CHAPTER III

IMMEDIATELY succeeding events appeared to Mrs. Nugent in the light of a just sequence.

"I am not surprised to find that you wish to go away for a while, my dear," she said plaintively to her niece. "Indeed, I should think you could hardly endure it to see that poor, dear man, so pale and disappointed in his surplice, yet bearing up so nobly. You have dealt him a blow in his tenderest sensibilities, Anne, and one that he will never recover from. If you could find it in your heart to reconsider the matter even now, my love, I am quite sure I could—"

"Please don't speak of it, aunt," said Anne, decidedly. "I cannot say just how long I shall be away," she added, with a curious embarrassment of manner which entirely escaped Mrs. Nugent's short-sighted eyes. "I hope you will be quite comfortable while I am gone."

"And you are looking far handsomer than I

ever saw you, my dear," that lady went on with a fretful sigh. "I wish you would reflect on the fact that you are quite twenty-seven."

Anne laughed softly. "Please remember what I told you about Lizzie and the other maids," she said. "I have thought far too little about them and their comfort of late."

"What nonsense, child! Our maids are so spoiled that they never stay in a place after leaving us, and you know that quite well. What with having their own sitting-room and dining-room, and heat in their bedrooms and porcelain tubs for bathing, and two afternoons a week, I sometimes wonder what you will think of next."

Anne smiled. "I think I shall find some other things to do for them—soon," she said. "I intend to. And, aunt,"—the girl hesitated, while a slight flush overspread her face and neck,— "I don't know that I have spoken to you of a—a girl named Annie Smith. She is a perfectly honest, respectable person, though not an experienced cook, and I have promised to help her. She wishes to go out to service, and —"

"The very thing," observed Mrs. Nugent, placidly; "the under kitchen-maid is leaving at the end of her month. The girl is bent on marrying the butcher's boy. I sent for her to come to my room, and told her what I thought of her folly. I presume she will be looking for plain washing before long, with half a dozen babies clinging to her skirts. Persons in that rank of life should not be allowed to marry."

"Did you tell poor Mary all that, Aunt Nugent?"

"Certainly I did. And it is quite true, too. The silly little thing cried, and said she loved Henry.—It seems the butcher's boy is named Henry. I reproved her severely, and she grew quite impertinent. Such persons cannot understand the delicate sentiment of love, my dear. However, I have washed my hands of the girl. She is to leave, as I said, at the end of the month; so you may have your protégé call at the housekeeper's room."

"I am sure Annie Smith could not fill Mary's place," said Miss Smith, reflectively. "And I don't wish her to work where so many servants

are kept. What you will please to do, aunt, is simply to forward to any person who may inquire about the girl during my absence one of the letters of recommendation which you will find in my desk. Will you be so kind as to remember?"

"Certainly, my dear, since you ask it. If the girl calls here, I will see her myself; I think she might do very well under Bridget if, as you say, she is respectable and honest."

Miss Smith did not pursue the conversation further, and half an hour later she was driving to the railway station. The subsequent movements of this young woman were so singular that one must look for an explanation of them in a certain unpretentious volume labelled "Note-book," which formed a part of her modest luggage. The note-book in question bore on its front page, in Anne Smith's small, distinct handwriting, the words "Notes on Ontology." These "notes" begin abruptly as follows:—

I find that the women in the Ontological Club talk a vast deal about planes. As nearly as I can find out, planes are very much like the

shelves in a china-closet; and one cannot very well peek over the edge of one shelf to look at the objects on the shelves above or below. Even if one succeeds in peeking, there is n't much use in doing it, because one cannot possibly understand what is happening on any shelf but one's own. At least, that is what one woman said. Some of the others seem to be able to stand off and see all the shelves at once. They are what they call "unfolded," and very likely will never have to come back to the china-closet again—even to the top shelf of it. It gives one an odd feeling to think one may have been an East Indian or a Chinaman a few years back. I wonder what I was. And I wonder still more what I shall have to be next time.

I have been trying to realize that I have a solar plexus. If one can "concentrate," and become really conscious of having a solar plexus, one will not care a rap what happens next, or rather one can make things happen just as one likes. It seems to me that this would be like owning an Aladdin's lamp. My opinion is

probably due to the fact that I am not at all "unfolded." We all sat silent for half an hour in the Club this afternoon, with a fat, calm Hindu man, who looked something like an idol, on the platform. We were trying to "concentrate" the way he did. After a while I found myself staring hard at the back hair of the woman directly in front of me. I had somehow discovered that she wears two switches. I wonder what father would think of all this.

I wish I knew whether any of these astonishing things we are hearing at the Club are true or not. They are certainly interesting to a degree, but for my part I don't see how any of it is going to help me very much, to say nothing of the world at large. In fact, the most of it is being unearthed from antiquity for our latter-day benefit—or undoing. Really, I don't know which. The woman who lectured on reincarnation to-day said she knew for a fact that St. Paul and Napoleon Bonaparte were one and the same persons. It struck me as being a very singular idea. There is a tall, stout woman in

the Club named Mrs. Van Deuser, who is always talking fussily about "our æonian trends," and "our ætherial environments," and "our spiritual individualities." She is supposed to be very much "unfolded"; but I heard the other day that she beat down her sewing-woman shamefully on the price of some elaborate embroidered work. The woman told me about it herself. I saw that she had been crying when she brought me some work, and I asked her to tell me why, with the above result. Quite evidently Mrs. Van Deuser has not yet unfolded as to her purse.

We have had a sociological session at the Club. I confess that I have n't attended the meetings for a long while. They have been having a course of lessons on Astrology by a greasy-looking old man who lectures in a red cloak trimmed with ermine and covered with embroidered constellations, dragons, and things. He says he is a reincarnation of one of the three wise men. Mrs. Van Deuser called yesterday to tell me of the sociological meeting. She says I have missed a precious opportunity be-

cause I did not hear Professor Zewilowyk — if that is the way to spell his name. I dare say I have missed a number of them. I am really interested in “the servant problem,” so I promised to be present. The discussion has proved a great disappointment, but I have an idea nevertheless. Why am not I an American laboring woman?

The Rev. Frederick Gallatin has asked me to marry him. Aunt Nugent begs me with tears to accept him. The dear woman has discovered the appalling fact that I am rapidly drifting into old-maidhood. She urges me to realize that I am quite twenty-seven. In view of this undeniable fact I have decided to fall back on the idea that my soul mate is not incarnate in this particular lifetime of mine. One does not mind being an old maid under such circumstances; in fact, it is distinctly interesting and romantic.

I have made up my mind to see just what sort of a person I am apart from my present environment, which does n't seem to fit.

I have a real desire to work with my hands, to be tired, — yes, even to be dirty, for the pleasure of making all clean again. So I am going to work in somebody's kitchen. I am not going to do this because I am especially interested in "the masses." Really I am not interested in them at all. I am interested in myself. If I can find out what I am good for, it will be time then to take up other people's problems. I have been writing my own references, and I hope I have told the truth about myself. How can one answer for the honesty of a person who has never had the slightest temptation to be otherwise? If Anne Smith was hungry — really hungry — and a bun belonging to somebody else lay conveniently unguarded, would she eat it? I confess that I do not know.

I shall be glad to get away from Aunt Nugent. She sighs windily every time she looks at me; she is thinking — I know this telepathically — that I have thrown away my one golden chance of matrimony. She would have so liked to refer to "my niece, Mrs. Dr. Gallatin, a very philanthropic and influential woman, my dear."

My fingers are so cold I can hardly write, though I am wrapped in a smelly patchwork quilt which I have just taken from the unpleasant-looking bed in which I am to sleep to-night. Nevertheless I am cheerful, even jubilant. I have got a place! It was all absurdly easy. I said good-by to Winston at the door of the station. The poor old fellow looked really sorry. "It 'll be lonesome without you, miss," he said; then apologized for mentioning his feelings. Well-trained servants are not supposed to have discernible emotions of any sort. After dismissing the carriage, I walked through to the baggage-room, and arranged to store one of my trunks "till called for." The other I had sent to this boarding-house, a respectable place, where one may dine, sleep, and breakfast for fifty cents.

I left home in a cheap, ready-made suit, which I bought last week at a bargain sale for \$9.38. I don't think Aunt Nugent noticed it; but Lizzie did, and looked scandalized.

"Shan't I bring you your brown broadcloth, Miss Anne, 'stead of that?" she said, with an emphasis which made me smile.

"Why no, Lizzie," I said; "I think this dress quite nice enough. I like it very much, don't you?"

"Perhaps you did n't notice that the skirt is lined with percaline, miss," said Lizzie, sternly; "and I am sure the jacket does n't fit no more 'n anythink."

"One can't expect everything in a ready-made suit," I said coolly, as I put it on. "It was a bargain besides; it cost \$9.38."

I saw a light come into her eyes. "Where —" she began. Then bit the words off short with a blush. Lizzie blushes beautifully. She has the real English complexion of milk and roses.

"I beg your pardon, miss," she added stiffly. "I hope as how I knows my place."

If Lizzie and I were condemned to a prolonged sojourn on a desert island, I have no doubt we should shortly find many things in common. As it is, the brotherhood of man is something of a myth as far as mistress and maid are concerned.

"I 'm sure I hope I shall know my place as well," I answered honestly. Lizzie looked

mystified and a trifle uneasy. She undoubtedly suspected me of sarcasm.

The first move I made, after getting rid of Anne Smith, was to secure a room for the night. At first I thought I could not do this, as the landlady seemed rather suspicious of my resources.

She stared hard at me, and harder still at my trunk, a small shabby one, which the cabman had dumped beside me on the steps after bidding me to "look lively" for my fare. "Ain't you any friends in the city?" she demanded, fixing her ferret eyes on my hat, a plain Alpine, chastely swathed in a brown veil, and from thence descending by slow degrees to the toe of my well-worn boot. "I don't never like to take in one-night roomers — leastways ladies."

"Why not?" I asked anxiously. "I 'm afraid it is too late to look for a place to-night."

Her sour face cleared somewhat. "What kind of a place was you lookin' for?" she inquired.

"I 'm a bit uncertain," I began in my usual tone, then, catching her hard black eye as it strove to penetrate between the buttons of my ill-fitting

jacket to the secrets of my guilty heart, I added with a bold toss of the head: "Ain't you awful curious, ma'am; but I don't mind tellin' you that I am a-goin' out to service, if I gets a place that suits. If you don't want to keep me over night, though, I guess I can find a place around the corner."

"You c'n come in," said the woman, opening the door. Later she informed me that she suspected me of being "a lady in trouble." She added that she had had a heap of fuss with 'em, first and last, and that a body could n't be too careful.

I agreed with her unqualifiedly, and paid her on the spot for a night's lodging. After this transaction my landlady grew quite communicative, and accommodating to the point of giving me the address of an intelligence office only three blocks away.

"You c'n say 'at you 're stoppin' at Mis' Buckleses," she said kindly. "The woman 'at keeps the office is a p'tic'lar frien' o' mine."

The office in question was a dingy room three flights of dirty stairs from the street, up which I

toiled in the wake of a couple of giggling colored girls. My heart sank within me as I entered, still following the lead of the negresses, one of whom advanced to the desk in the corner with the peculiar swaying, sidelong gait of her race. "Please, Mis' Lehn, Julia an' me couldn't git 'long nohow to that place you sent us las' week. We's lef'."

The stout, showily dressed woman who sat behind the desk turned over a leaf of the book that lay before her. "You're a couple of worthless baggages," she said, without show of emotion.

"No'm we ain't, Mis' Lehn," retorted the girl, "we's awful smart and likely, we is, but we ain't a-goin' to be put upon like we was no 'count niggahs. You give us 'nother place, an' you'll see. We don' want no mo' 'an fo' in fambly."

The woman's cold eyes had already seized upon me, as I lurked in the background, uneasily debating the question as to whether I would better not, after all, reconsider my sociological aspirations.

"You c'n pay your money, and call to-morrow at ten," she said shortly, still addressing herself to the first comers, while her eyes and a slight

motion of her elaborately frizzled head commanded me to approach.

"But dey ain' done pay us yit, Mis' Lehn," whined the colored girl. "Dey's awful mean folks to wuk fo', dey suahly is. You kin cha'ge it up to us. We'll pay fust thing next week."

"You're lyin'," said the woman. "Go 'long. Was you lookin' for help, ma'am?" she added in a high-pitched, conciliatory tone, as she addressed me.

"No," I almost whispered. "I—I want a place." I was painfully conscious of three pairs of staring eyes set hard on my crimsoning face. One of the negresses giggled. "My lawdy! An' I was mos' thinkin' she was a lady fo' suah!" she whispered loudly.

I bethought myself in time to bestow a glance of scorn on the two. "I ain't very experienced," I added loftily. "I've been livin' to home, an' ain't had to work till now. I'm stoppin' to Mis' Buckleses. She told me to mention her name, ma'am."

"Have you any reference?" demanded the cold, official voice of the frizzled one.



" ' HAVE YOU ANY REFERENCE ? ' "

I produced the reference of Miss Anne Smith of Beacon Street. The woman read it slowly, scanning the quality of the paper and envelope. "Inexperienced, but clean an' honest," she repeated thoughtfully. "Well, you look clean enough, an' I presume you're as honest as most. Your name an' address, an' two dollars, please."

"I'll have to get a place right away," I said, as I laid the bills on the desk. I had not expected to pay this fee, and I was actually frightened as I looked into my purse.

"Well, I c'd sen' you out to-morrow mornin', if you'll take a general housework place—in the country. There's a woman in Bentley Manor that's changed six times a'ready since September. She's out of a girl again, an' wants one in a hurry. She pays twelve a month, an' helps some with the cookin'."

"I'll go," I said.

CHAPTER IV

MRS. ALGERNON DE PUYSER-JONES was in process of entertaining a visitor in the parlor of her house in Bentley Manor. The visitor — the clergyman's wife making parochial calls — had stood patiently for five long minutes on the doorstep of the De Puyster-Jones residence, distant sounds of hurriedly banged doors and scuttling footsteps assuring her experienced ear that the bell had sounded within and preparations to receive her were on foot.

"I've a good mind to leave my card and go right along," the good lady told herself at last. "I want to make six more calls before supper-time." Just then the door flew open and Mrs. Jones herself (she was Mrs. de Puyster-Jones on her visiting cards only), flushed and somewhat dishevelled as to her general appearance, invited the visitor to enter.

"I'm sure I don't know what you'll think of

me, Mrs. Bostwick," exclaimed Mrs. Jones, as the two seated themselves in the parlor. "But I've been having the most dreadful time with servants lately. I tell Algy he'll have to break up and go to boarding, if I can't get somebody before long." Mrs. Jones was a large, somewhat limp young woman, with an uncertain complexion, and a quantity of reddish hair which was tumbled untidily behind her ears.

The visitor murmured sympathy and acquiescence, her shrewd eyes taking in the dusty and forlorn condition of the densely furnished little room.

"I've had six since September," pursued Mrs. Jones, with rising earnestness, "and each was more dreadful than the last. For a week I haven't had anybody. I declare, I've been almost crazy; what with getting Mr. Jones off to the city on the half-past seven car, and the children to school at a quarter to nine, I hardly know what I'm about. I'm awfully nervous, Mrs. Bostwick. I don't know as I've told you that I've been on the verge of nervous prostration *twice* in the last year. Yes, indeed, I have;

I'm taking medicine all the time now. And if *you* have nerves, you know what *that* means. Some people seem born without nerves, don't they? There's Mrs. Stone across the street. That woman is a perfect marvel to me. She does all her own work and every bit of her plain sewing besides. That woman has n't a nerve in her body, not one. But I tell Algy I'm not made that way. If you could *see* my kitchen, Mrs. Bostwick. It's just the way that dreadful Mary left it. The most impudent creature! I have n't had the strength to do more than to get the meals and wash the dishes since she went. I've been lying down all the afternoon *trying* to get up strength to get Mr. Jones's dinner."

Mrs. Bostwick here stemmed the tide of information to civilly regret the interrupted nap.

"No, indeed, don't say a word. I'm awfully glad you called. I was just getting dressed when you rang. I simply have to lie down, you know. I am so nervously organized. But I'm expecting a girl this afternoon. I don't suppose she'll be any good, but then I've simply got to have some-

body. I told Algy to tell those tiresome intelligence office people that they *must* send me a girl or take my name off their books. You have to be firm with such people. They're always ready to impose on you. Don't you find them so? I declare, I believe *that creature* is coming here. Do look, Mrs. Bostwick. You don't suppose that can be my girl, do you? Why, she is really quite a nice-looking person. Well, I'm sure I deserve a treasure if anybody ever did. Yes, she is coming around back, and she has a bundle. Well, I *am* relieved! It did seem as though it would kill me to get dinner. I always did hate cooking, or housework of any kind. Don't be in a hurry, Mrs. Bostwick. I'll just let her in, if you'll excuse me, and—"

But Mrs. Bostwick with a frugally calculating eye for the fleeting minutes had risen with a relieved sigh. The subsequent monologue carried quite to the verge of the front doorsteps, in the course of which Mrs. de Puyster-Jones treated her visitor to a detailed description of Algy's late attack of lumbago, and Ethel's sudden seizure with the grippe, touching lightly on the peccadilloes

of the grocer, and closing with a spirited dissertation on the shamefully short weight of the last ton of coal delivered at the De Puyster-Jones residence, which Mr. Jones had taken the pains to weigh by scuttlefuls — indeed, he had, consumed so much time that Annie Smith, standing before the back door, had ample time for observation and reflection.

That young person, neatly attired in her bargain suit, already somewhat drabbled about the skirt, actually laughed aloud as she surveyed the latticed enclosure in which she stood. It is likely that few other persons in the town of Bentley Manor would have seen anything humorous in the collection of objects at which she gazed. The ash barrel, its legitimate contents topped with a miscellaneous collection of tin cans and waste paper, guarded a platoon of rusty and disabled kitchen utensils brimming over with malodorous refuse. In the background lurked a dark-complexioned mop, three spavined brooms, and a tin pail oozing kerosene oil. A fine wet snow was sifting itself impartially over the scene.

Repeated knockings of a respectful degree of

loudness failing to elicit any response from the mud-spattered door, Miss Smith resorted to the handle of her umbrella. The door flew wide at this, and the girl was confronted by her new mistress.

"Are you the girl from Lehn's?" inquired the lady, without preamble.

"Yes, ma'am."

"You can come right in the kitchen. I guess I'd better have a little talk with you before you go up-stairs to change your dress."

"Yes, ma'am."

"I'm *very* particular about my work," observed Mrs. Jones, with rising severity of manner. "You may not think so to look at this kitchen," — the girl's bright eyes were roving over the place with evident dismay, — "but I've had a dreadful creature here — an Irish girl. I do hope you're German."

"No, ma'am, I'm an American."

"Dear, dear! I was hoping you might be German, or a Swede; Americans do have such ideas! Are you a good cook?"

The girl hesitated. "I can make good coffee,"

she said slowly. "Yes, and a Welsh rabbit, and I suppose I could cook vegetables if you have a receipt-book. I'm not experienced. I told Mrs. Lehn so. Didn't she tell you?"

"Not experienced! I should *say* so! What in the world did that woman send you here for? I don't believe you'll do for us at all. But wait,—" Anne had risen with pleased alacrity,—"I shall keep you for a week, anyway. Perhaps (vaguely) I can teach you. What is your name?"

"Annie Smith, ma'am."

"And what wages do you expect?"

"Mrs. Lehn said you paid twelve dollars a month; she said you would help with the cooking."

"Well, of course I expect to *see* to things in the kitchen; but for twelve dollars a month *and board*,—remember you are far better off than a factory girl in that respect,—I shall expect you to get the meals, *of course*."

"What else do you expect me to do, ma'am?"

The girl's tone was respectfully inquiring, but Mrs. de Puyster-Jones's limp figure straightened itself with a little jerk. "The washing and iron-

ing, sweeping and cleaning, *of course*. And I did have one girl—she was a treasure in some respects—who always made my bed and the children's and tidied the rooms. *She* was a German, not very long over. She used to get up at four o'clock every morning regularly and put the place in perfect order before any of us were out of bed."

"Why did n't she stay with you, ma'am?"

Mrs. de Puyster-Jones looked offended. "I don't think that is a proper question for you to ask. I am *very* particular about impertinence, Annie. *That* you must understand from the very start with me. I *never* permit it in my house, *never!* Gretchen would have been simply perfect if she had not been so impertinent, and if she had been fond of children. Are you fond of children?"

"I don't know any children, ma'am."

"Don't know any children! What an idea! You must know some. Well, I have two children, and I require my servant to be polite and respectful to them. Of course, children will be children, but if one is fond of them, they don't

mind that. You *look* good-natured, I'm sure, and—yes—clean. I hope you have some good work dresses; the last girl I had looked like a fright when she came in to wait on table. Mr. Jones is *very* particular about the way a girl looks. He really can't eat unless everything is just so. Have you ever worn a cap?"

"I've never worked out, ma'am."

"You have n't? Dear, dear! Well, perhaps it will be just as well. You'll learn my ways all the easier—if I decide to keep you. Now, if you'll come upstairs and change your dress, I think you can wash up the dishes and scrub the kitchen—be sure you don't forget the tables—before it is time to get dinner. We have dinner at six, and Mr. Jones wants it *on time*. He is *very* particular about that. Oh, I forgot to ask how old you are."

"I'm twenty-seven, ma'am."

"Well, I declare, I should n't have said so old. Have you any followers? I'm very particular about followers."

"Do you mean beaux, ma'am? No, I have n't one."

"I'm *thankful* to hear that; I don't permit followers. You never can tell but what they may be burglars. I always feel uneasy if there is a man in the kitchen. But at your age, you probably won't have any. Now we'll go right upstairs."

Mrs. Jones led the way, her progress being somewhat delayed by copious explanatory notes. "These stairs are shamefully dirty; in fact, the house has n't seen a broom for over a week. My health is delicate — very delicate. I'm almost a nervous wreck, the doctor tells me, and of course when I'm out of a girl, I don't pretend to keep the work up. But you can get up early to-morrow morning and clean up the worst of it before breakfast, can't you? I do hope you are the kind that wakes up without being called. Besides, the alarm-clock is broken. I do believe I've bought two dozen alarm-clocks if I've bought one; but my girls have been so fearfully careless, dropping them about as if they were five-cent pans. And that reminds me, I want to tell you from the very start that Mr. Jones says I *must* charge up breakage.

We've really had dishes enough broken since we were married to furnish three china shops. So I've made an *invariable rule* about dishes. I want you to be sure and tell me the minute you break a dish; don't go and throw it in the ash barrel and say nothing, the way my last girl did."

The lady of the house paused breathless at the foot of the second flight. "Stairs almost kill me," she observed plaintively. "I never come up here if I can help it, the stairs are so steep and my heart is weak; I'm subject to faint spells. I do hope I can get rested up a little *now*. Dear, dear!" she added fretfully, "how this attic does look! The children have been playing here, and they've pulled everything about. There, this is your room."

The low-browed door at the left yielded under the lady's touch, and the two entered. The one window was tightly closed. Anne opened it without apology or delay. "It does smell a little close," observed Mrs. Jones, glancing about the apartment with a shrug and a shiver. "But there's no heat up here. I declare, I told Mary

she *must* clean her room before she left, and she said she had. But the creature never told the truth if she could tell a lie. I'm really sorry it looks so. You can tidy it up some time to-morrow. I should have come up myself if I had n't been so exhausted."

Anne's dismayed eyes glanced from the weakly apologetic smile on the woman's face to the rickety bedstead, with its lumpy straw mattress protruding through the soiled and ragged sheet. A tangle of frowzy bedclothes trailed on the floor, which in its turn exhibited a motley array of crumpled ribbons, rusty hairpins, burnt matches, empty bottles, a pair of shapeless shoes, and divers toilet receptacles taxed to their utmost capacity.

"Do you — expect me to — sleep in this room?" she asked in a low voice.

Mrs. de Puyster-Jones apparently did not hear the question. "Jam!" she exclaimed, in a heart-breaking whisper. "My best raspberry jam! I thought it had gone fast. Did you ever!" The lady was pointing with a fine dramatic gesture to a plate and knife daubed with some

reddish substance which had been thoughtlessly added to the collection under the bed.

"I do hope you're honest," she added, turning severely upon Anne. "Think of that wicked, wicked girl eating my best raspberry jam in this room!"

"I don't see how she could do it," murmured Anne, a wicked twinkle in her gray eyes.

"No, nor I," pursued Mrs. Jones, with a sudden change of tone. "And that reminds me, are you a Catholic?"

"No, ma'am, I'm an Episcopalian."

"An Episcopalian! Well, I declare, I don't know as I've ever had an Episcopal girl. I had one Methodist; but my, what a temper *she* had! Actually, the creature told me she would *pray* for me. And that same day she had the impertinence to slap Ethel's ears in the kitchen. Of course I sent her flying that very night. At any rate, I'm glad you're not a Catholic—though if you insist on going to church, early mass is convenient. Mary used to go and be back before we were up on Sunday morning. Do you go to church?"

"Sometimes," said Anne, doubtfully.

"Well, I hope you're not *too* rigid about it, because we have a good deal of company on Sunday — friends from the city, you know. We always lived in the city till a few years ago, then Ethel was so delicate that we moved out here. Now, I guess I'll go down. Change your dress as quick as you can. You've a working dress in your bundle, I suppose. By the way, did you send your trunk here?"

"No, ma'am, I thought —"

"You thought you'd see how you liked me, I suppose. Actually, our girl told me that right out. The impertinence of it! Well, I'll tell you one thing, if you do what's right, you'll get along nicely with me. I'm not a bit hard on a girl. In fact, I'm *very* considerate — too considerate, Algy — I mean Mr. Jones — says. Mr. Jones believes in being right up and down about everything. But that's the way with business men. Now come down as soon as you possibly can, and I'll tell you about dinner."

At eleven o'clock that night, Anne Smith inscribed the following brief sentences in her note-

book: "Why does the American woman of the laboring class decline to enter domestic service? Can the answer to this question be sought in the person of the American mistress?"

This done, she lay down on the rickety bedstead with an air of grim determination. "The sense of smell is the most spiritual of all the senses," she quoted as she put out the light. "I will now concentrate on the tip of my nose and produce the odor of violets."

CHAPTER V

ANNIE SMITH was poking gingerly at the range in the kitchen of the De Puyster-Jones residence at six-thirty the following morning when a brisk, masculine foot on the floor apprised her of the approach of Mr. de Puyster-Jones.

"Good morning," quoth Mr. Jones, good-naturedly. "What 's your name, Mary — Bridget — Julia — blamed if I can keep track of 'em! Guess you 'd better let me show you about that range. I 've got to have my breakfast and be off inside an hour. Mrs. Jones says she 'll stop in bed this morning. She 's kind of played out, I guess. You take her up something after I 'm gone, will you? There, I guess that fire 'll go now. Don't let the grass grow under your feet, girl. Boil me a couple of eggs, make some coffee, and set the cold ham on the table."

Annie Smith had already, as stated, confessed her inexperience, but something or other in her past stood her in stead in the present crisis. The

eggs and coffee were forthcoming in a surprisingly short space of time; so was a plate of crisp toast. The girl felt pleasantly flushed with triumph, and Mr. de Puyster-Jones stared in amazement when he sat down to the neatly laid table. "By George!" he exclaimed exuberantly when he ran up to kiss his languid wife, "I guess you've struck it rich on your girl this time, Carrie."

"What do you mean, Algy?" inquired Mrs. Jones, sleepily. "Did the creature get you a decent breakfast? Dear, dear! I do hope she will see that the children start for school in time. Tell her to call them when you go down, Algy, and to see that they get up. Oh, yes, and tell her she must braid Miss Ethel's hair. Be sure you say *Miss* Ethel, and tell her to see that Master Algernon has clean hands and that his hair is brushed behind. I'm going to sleep the whole morning if I can."

"Pretty rough on the girl," ejaculated Mr. Jones, with a puzzled expression on his round, good-humored face, as he swung himself aboard his car. "Blamed if I could manage the office that way."

The general housework horizon still continued

to enlarge around the astonished Annie Smith. Miss Ethel Jones, a pallid, undersized child with sharp, inquiring eyes, added several important items to her fund of information during the process of her toilet. "Mamma most always stays in bed mornings when we have a girl," she remarked. "You 're to take up her breakfast after we go, and mind you have the coffee hot. Are you going to wash to-day?"

"Wash!" echoed Annie Smith, "wash what?"

"Why, wash clothes, stupid! I have n't had a clean apron in two weeks. That horrid Mary did n't do the washing last week. You'd better go at it, I should think, or you'll never get done; the hamper is just stuffed. I like the way you do my hair; you have n't pulled once; but it's taken an awful long time to do it that way. Now you've got to hurry up with our breakfast; we want chocolate and toast and ham and strawberry jam. I know where the jam is; but don't you eat any of it, mind. And you're not to drink the milk, either. We want the milk for lunch. That nasty Bridget we had before Mary came used to drink most every drop of it. I guess

you're different. You look so. I hope you'll stay. And say, don't you be scared of mamma; she won't care what you do, after a week. She always acts as if she was awfully strict at first. She says she has to break in a new girl carefully, but after that she won't bother, if you get decent things to eat. You'll see."

The second breakfast over, a hurried scramble after books, mittens, caps, and rubbers ensued, in the course of which Miss Ethel, who had previously burned her mouth with a hurried gulp of hot chocolate, boxed her small brother's ears with a practised hand. Whereupon the rotund facsimile of Mr. de Puyster-Jones hurled himself upon his sister with screams of rage which brought a dishevelled figure to the top of the stairs. "Ethel! Nonny! You naughty children! what *are* you doing? If you don't be quiet, I shall come right downstairs and punish you both severely! *Can't* you make them stop, Annie? What in the world are you thinking of to allow them to make such a noise? It's enough to drive one frantic. It does seem to me I can never get a moment's rest."

The children had desisted from active warfare, and were staring at each other truculently. "Get your things right on this minute," commanded their mother. "If you'll be good children and go right to school, I'll give you each something nice when you come home."

"What, *candy*?" shouted the two in unison. "We want it now."

"I won't go to school unless you give me some candy, mamma," added Ethel, positively.

"'N' I won't, either," echoed the boy, jumping up and down with a loud, thumping sound. "Where is it, mamma? Where's the candy?"

"Dear, dear!" complained Mrs. Jones; "I can't stand here all day in the cold talking, I shall take my death. I *do* wish you would be quiet and behave for once in your lives. Children *are* such nuisances. Annie!"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Here, take this nickel and run over to the grocery and get five cents' worth of peppermints and divide them between the children. Now do go on, children. You're shockingly late. I should n't wonder if your teacher would scold. Annie!"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Hurry back as quick as you can and make me some fresh coffee. I'm positively faint with exhaustion; I have n't had a moment of rest yet. And — Annie!"

"Yes, ma'am."

"I guess you'd better see if we're out of cut sugar; I don't believe there's a bit for my coffee. The children eat it up so, I can't keep it in the house. Get three pounds and charge it. Annie!"

"Yes, ma'am."

"*Hurry*, will you?"

When Annie Smith toiled upstairs half an hour later bearing a breakfast tray, her mistress eyed her with a frown. "Here you come at last," she began fretfully. Then her face cleared a little. "Why, really, your tray looks quite inviting. Take the things off that stand there and set it by the bed. Now you may pour me a cup of coffee. My heart flutters so every time the children quarrel that it really frightens me. And they quarrel continually. Dear, dear! it is such a care to bring up children. I often

tell Mr. Jones that he can't imagine in his quiet office what I have to endure here at home. Really, your coffee is very good, Annie. I don't know when I've tasted a decent cup of coffee before. Can you make good cake?"

"I don't know, ma'am, I never made any."

"Never made any cake? Are you sure? I remember one girl I had who declared she could n't cook at all, so I slaved around and did about everything, and afterward she left me and went to work for Mrs. Stillman and turned out an elegant cook. She had the impertinence to tell Mrs. Stillman that I did n't pay for a cook, and that she was n't going to do anything she was n't paid for. Now, did you ever hear of such a thing? I always say that when I hire a girl I hire them to do *whatever I want done*. And that reminds me, have you scrubbed the kitchen yet? You know I wanted you to do that yesterday."

"No, ma'am."

"Well, why not? It must be ten o'clock, is n't it?"

"Yes, ma'am, it is a quarter past."

"Then you should certainly have had that

kitchen scrubbed by this time. Dear, dear ! girls always do waste their time so. And the whole house wants sweeping. And there is the washing, too. When are you going to do that ? ”

“ I ’m afraid I can’t do it at all, ma’am ; I never washed.”

“ What ’s that you ’re saying ? Not going to do the washing ? You must remember what I said to you about being impertinent, Annie. *Of course* you ’ll do it. That is a part of general house-work. We *must* have some clean clothes this week.”

“ Why not send the soiled things to the laundry, ma’am ? ”

“ To the *laundry* ? *What* an idea ! Don’t you know they just ruin the clothes at the laundry ? Besides, it ’s too expensive. We’re not rich people — no, indeed. Of course Mr. Jones does an excellent business, and all that, but what with the children and my doctor’s bills, no, indeed, I ’ll not send the clothes to the laundry. I suppose I could get a woman. But I can’t afford to pay you as much as twelve dollars a month and hire a woman too. That would be absurd. And the

work would be ridiculously easy without the washing. You must see that yourself."

"It seems to me, ma'am, that it is very hard."

"Well, really, you must be inexperienced. My work *hard*? Well, well! I wonder what I shall hear next. You ought to work for Mrs. Stillman a while if you think my work is hard. But really, Annie, you *must* stay your month out, you know. I'll get a woman to do the washing this week, because it did go over a week; that dreadful Mary got out of everything she possibly could. You go down now and hurry up and put your kitchen to rights. Be sure and have the children's lunch ready at ten minutes past twelve. Don't let them get into the preserve closet. Ethel is so bilious. Here, take this tray away. Tell everybody that comes I am not well and cannot be disturbed. If a stout man in checkered trousers comes with a milliner's bill, tell him I'm out of town for two weeks. And — Annie!"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Do you suppose you can get around to sweep the parlor before lunch? Really, you must. It is a sight. And the front hall, too. It won't take

long. I might have calls this afternoon. And that reminds me, I declare I had nearly forgotten it. I am invited to an afternoon tea to-day, and I've simply got to have my best white petticoat washed and ironed. My silk one is in rags. Look in the hamper for it, will you, and take it down and wash it right away."

"What about the kitchen, ma'am, and the sweeping?"

"Why, the skirt won't take long. Now if you'd only done the kitchen yesterday. You'll soon see how the work runs behind if you don't do everything at the right time. That's what my mother used to say. And I've always been very particular about it. Don't forget about that skirt now. I'll try to sleep a little before lunch. I'm really tired to death. Don't make the skirt too stiff. I ought to have a new silk one; but Algy—I mean Mr. Jones—says I'll have to wait till next month."

Annie Smith's firm young body stood her in good stead for the next few hours. She washed the white skirt and hung it out to dry. Later she wrestled with the dark-complexioned mop and the

darker problem presented by the kitchen floor. She finally grew so absorbed in the solution that time fled away unaware. A loud bang of the kitchen door and two pairs of muddy feet stamping across the damp floor surprised her in a hopeless attempt to remove the grime of past régimes from the kitchen table. "Is our lunch ready?" demanded Ethel; "we've got to have it this minute, and I want something good, too; I'm hungry."

"So 'm I," shouted Master Algernon. "Come on in the dining-room, Ethel."

"Wait a minute, children," began Annie, with a guilty blush. "I'll get your lunch just as soon as I —"

A wild rush through the dining-room and a sound of clamorous voices above apprised her of the fact that her shortcomings had already been reported. She hurriedly laid the table; then discovered to her dismay that the kitchen fire was quite extinct. It appeared to her as she poked hopelessly among the lumpy ashes that concentration was not after all so desirable an accomplishment as she had been led to suppose.

"*Why, Annie!*" Mrs. Jones announced her presence in the kitchen with these two words, spoken in a tone which conveyed volumes.

"I'm very sorry, ma'am, but I forgot all about the children's lunch, I was so interested in trying to clean the floor and the tables, and so the fire went out, and—"

"I should *say* so," interrupted Mrs. de Puyster-Jones, with rapidly gathering indignation. "Your mind cannot have been on your work at all. Have you remembered to attend to the furnace?"

"The furnace, ma'am! Do I have to see to the furnace?"

"Why, certainly you do. Don't you remember that I told you so yesterday? Mr. Jones generally banks the fire at night; but the girl always shakes the ashes down in the morning and looks after it during the day. Do you mean to tell me that you have neglected that too?"

"You didn't tell me about the furnace, ma'am."

"Don't prevaricate, Annie; I always insist upon perfect truthfulness in a girl. But there is no time to discuss the matter now. You may

give the children some of that cold ham and some bread and butter and milk. Do it at once. I will take my lunch later, when you have rekindled the fire. I shall want some hot tea after all this excitement. Have you ironed my skirt yet?"

"No, ma'am, but I washed it. It's out on the line."

Mrs. Jones sighed deeply. "You had better sec to the furnace immediately. I fear the fire is out."

"Shall I attend to the furnace before I get the children's lunch, ma'am?"

"Dear, dear! you are certainly enough to try the patience of a saint, Annie. *Why* do you stand there talking? Run down at once to the furnace and throw on some coal, *then* get the lunch. And you must *hurry*. After I have eaten my lunch, Annie, I must have a serious talk with you."

Notes on Ontology from Anne Smith's Book:—

I have found it neither pleasant nor easy to play the part of the brute atom. So far I have scored a decided failure in the rôle. I have had to leave my first place and am back in town, work-

ing for my board at my friend, Mrs. Buckle's. Mrs. Buckle is a kind soul.

When I left Mrs. de Puyster-Jones yesterday afternoon, with exactly two dollars and four cents in my pocket, — I received no wages because I did not stop my week out, — I quite naturally returned to this hospitable roof.

The good woman met me at the door. "Why, if it ain't Annie Smith come back a'ready!" she exclaimed, with a broad smile of welcome. "Didn't you make out at your place after all?" For that warming smile I could have fallen on her neck.

"No," I answered miserably; "I don't believe I can do general housework. It's too awfully general."

I am to spend certain hours in the kitchen, which will pay for my lodging and meals till I can find another place.

Mrs. de Puyster-Jones informed me yesterday that I was by far the most "impossible creature" she had ever seen; this when we were having our heart-to-heart talk after luncheon.

"In that case," I observed thoughtlessly, "I would better not stay with you."

"Don't be impertinent, Annie," said Mrs. Jones, severely.

On this particular shelf — the kitchen shelf — I find that a well-turned or even grammatical sentence is regarded as impertinent. I wonder why?

"I was n't meanin' to be imper'ent, ma'am," I ventured, endeavoring to repair the breach. "I ain't been brought up that way. But I think as how I ought to have a decent, clean bed to sleep in; and I should like to arrange the work so that I would know exactly what I was to do and when I was to do it. I hope that ain't unreasonable of me, ma'am."

I said this in a really humble and conciliatory tone. In the language of the shelf, I was "meachin'."

Mrs. Jones rose with a Jove-like expression of indignation.

"*That* will do, Annie," she said peremptorily. "You may go at once. I have already told you that I hire a girl for *my* convenience, and for that alone. You are utterly unfit to remain in my house."

Subsequently she gave me my carfare, remarking that I had not earned my board during the twenty-four hours spent under her roof.

Is it possible that I am really stupider than the average servant girl? What, then, is education?

CHAPTER VI

I HAVE found it wonderfully easy to turn a new leaf in this particular book of experience. I no longer wonder at the shifting population of our kitchens; what could be more tempting to the average feminine mind than the ability to drop at will any given problem of domestic life and begin a brand new one on a fresh slate?

I found the befrizzled mistress of the intelligence office as imperturbable as before. She seemed neither surprised nor displeased at my lack of success, dismissing the matter with a curt "Those kind mostly changes frequent."

I did not venture to inquire whether "those kind" referred to my late mistress or to me or to both, and Mrs. Lehn did not enlighten me. I was obliged to lay bare my financial embarrassments, and she kindly consented to take a dollar down, the other dollar to be charged against my first week's wages in a new place.

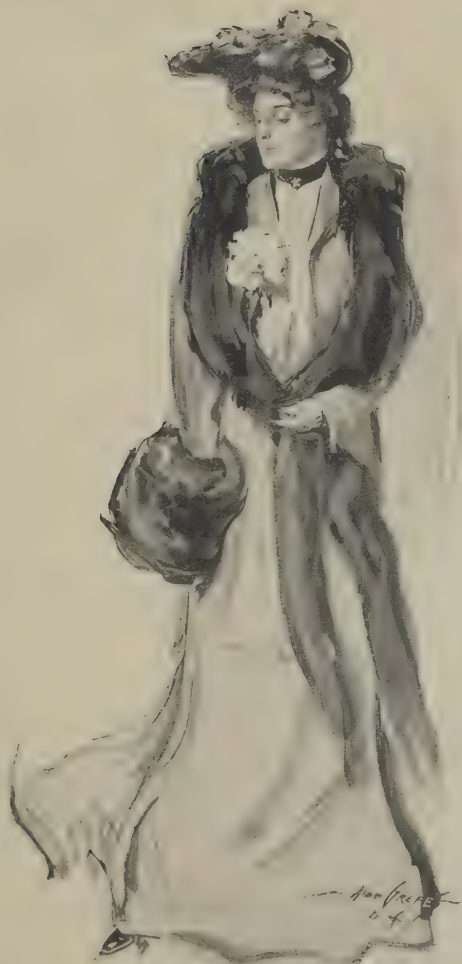
"But suppose no one will keep me for a week?" I suggested unhappily.

She looked me over again with the air of a shrewd merchant appraising a shop-worn garment. "You ain't bad to look at—even if you ain't experienced," she responded encouragingly. "There's plenty 'at 'u'd be glad to get you."

At that moment the door opened, and a young and extremely pretty woman entered. I suppose it is because I am not the least bit pretty myself that I love beauty in other women. The young woman was tall and slender and very smartly dressed in a brown cloth suit which matched her eyes and hair; her pretty round chin nestled daintily in a nest of dark fur, and a bunch of violets completed the effect. The smile with which she introduced her dainty self and her errand revealed charming dimples and the whitest of teeth.

"Do I inquire for a maid here?" she asked.

Mrs. Lehn assented, while rather conspicuously completing a rapid inventory of the newcomer's toilet. "I guess you ain't on my books," she added thoughtfully.



"A YOUNG AND EXTREMELY PRETTY WOMAN ENTERED."

"You mean I haven't been here before?" inquired the young woman. "No, I haven't. I am just commencing housekeeping —" she blushed vividly — "and I want a maid to — to cook, and keep the rooms in order."

"Washing an' ironing?" inquired Mrs. Lehn, tersely.

"Why, I don't know; I had n't thought about that. Is n't it too much work for one maid? I never kept house, you know."

"That's accordin'," observed Mrs. Lehn, tapping her book with her pencil. "I guess you want a cook an' a second girl. I can send you a couple o' girls this afternoon, or any time you say. Colored or white?"

"How much do they cost by the month?" asked the young woman, doubtfully.

"First-class cook, forty, thirty, twenty-five; medium, eighteen; second girl, twenty, sixteen, fourteen, 'cordin'."

The young woman plunged into some sort of unaccustomed mental calculation which brought a puzzled frown to her white forehead. It made her look prettier than ever. She finally sighed

and shook her head. "No, I don't think I want two servants," she said decidedly. "We live in a small apartment with the tiniest kitchen; there would n't be room for two maids, even if —" On second thought she left this sentence unfinished and began another with a fleeting glance of inquiry at me. "I think I want just a nice clean girl to — why, to work, don't you know, and — and she must n't be too expensive."

"General housework," said Mrs. Lehn, gloomily. "*Experienced*, eighteen; raw [she pronounced it *rahr*], ten, twelve, an' fourteen, 'cordin'."

"Could I have — a — one of the twelve-dollar kind to-day, if you please?"

I started forward impulsively in answer to a second appealing glance from the pretty brown eyes. "Would I do, ma'am?" I asked. "I am the twelve-dollar kind, and I want a place to-day."

The preliminaries were quickly arranged, and as I had my bundle of working clothes with me, I left the intelligence office in the company of my new mistress.

"Do you know, I liked you from the very first,"

she said to me, as Mrs. Lehn's door closed behind us. "You — you look so different from the ordinary maid. I hope you will like — us."

"I shall," I responded with conviction.

My pretty mistress lifted her little head with a suggestion of hauteur. "My name is Mrs. Richard Ely," she said with a beautiful blush, which I could see annoyed her. "What is yours? I did not think to ask the woman."

I hesitated for the fraction of a second. "My name is Anne Smith," I answered.

"Anne Smith," she repeated thoughtfully; "that is a very good name for a maid; it seems somehow as neat and suitable as a clean white apron. Have you plenty of aprons, Anne?"

"Why no, ma'am," I confessed; "I have only worked out for a little while. I think I ought to have told you before that my last mistress did n't like me at all. I only stopped with her one day."

"Why did n't she like you?" inquired Mrs. Ely, gravely.

"Well, ma'am," I answered truthfully, "I think it was because she wanted the eighteen-dollar experienced kind, and I was only a twelve-dollar raw

one. I tried to do my best, but she said I was 'an impossible creature.'"

My pretty mistress sighed apprehensively. I could see she was debating as to whether she ought not to exchange me at once for the eighteen-dollar variety. "What is it to be—raw?" she inquired at length. "I did n't like to ask that woman. And what is the difference between ten, twelve, and fourteen dollar raw ones?"

"I am raw," I answered promptly, "because I never worked out much. I am the twelve-dollar raw kind because I am twenty-seven years old, and I can make good coffee and toast and lay the table neatly and wait on it properly. I can clean, too," I added somewhat proudly, as I remembered my feats in the De Puyster-Jones kitchen. "But I don't know how to make cake or bread, and I never washed and ironed."

"I am glad you can make good coffee," my mistress said. "Mine is queer, Dick says."

We boarded a car just then, and as I sat on the opposite side from my mistress we did not exchange further words till we reached our destination.

It was a very tiny apartment at the top of a tall building in a quiet up-town street. My mistress unlocked her door, with one of her vivid blushes. "We are not really settled yet," she said, glancing about the sparsely furnished little rooms with a smile and a sigh. She seemed decidedly out of place there in her rich furs and gown. I noticed her hands when she drew off her gloves, they were white and slender and sparkled with jewels.

"We began with boarding," she explained, looking more than ever like a girl in her teens, as she showed me about the little kitchen; "but Dick — I mean Mr. Ely — was away all day; the rooms were dingy and unpleasant, and I had nothing to do from morning till night; so —" she stopped short and glanced at me almost appealingly. I could see that she was thinking herself very foolish to confide anything to the discretion of a maid.

There was a gas range in the kitchen, and the mite of a sink commanded an extended view of box-like back yards laced with clothes-lines. Opposite the sink a little china-closet disclosed a

dozen or so of shining tins and some pretty blue and white china.

"I made the breakfast this morning all by myself," said my mistress with a girlish laugh. "I tried muffins out of my new cook-book; but I forgot to put in something,—I think it was baking-powder,—and they were awfully funny. So was the coffee. I put in a whole egg, too. Dick was so amused, but he said he did n't care a bit; then we went out to the restaurant and had breakfast. But Dick—I mean Mr. Ely—does n't like restaurants, and I just loathe them. I never was in one in my life till—till a little while ago. Dick said he thought we would better get a cook. So I got you."

"But I'm not a cook," I said with dismay. "I never made muffins in my life. Don't forget that I am the raw kind."

My little mistress burst into a joyous laugh. "Isn't that too absurd!" she cried, clapping her hands. "But you are not at all stupid—I can see that very well; and then you are ever so old—you don't mind my saying that, do you? So you can study things out. Don't you think you

can? I have a splendid new cook-book with a daily menu and pictures of everything, and it tells just how to do every single thing, if one does n't forget. Now for dinner to-night—I thought it would be lovely to surprise Dick with a beautiful dinner." She spread an imposing cook-book on the table and bent over it like a schoolgirl.

"Now here is a menu for December sixteenth," she said doubtfully. "Do you think this sounds hard? 'Purée of chestnuts; celery; Cantonese chicken with macaroni; browned mashed potatoes; cauliflower with white sauce; orange pudding; coffee.' I don't know, though, whether Dick likes cauliflower or not. I like it if it's nice and white, the way it used to be in the garden at home; and Hannah made such delicious orange pudding."

Her small, round chin nestled deeper into the rosy palms, and a momentary mist clouded the bright, dark eyes. She jumped up presently with a laugh which sounded suspiciously like a half sob. "We shall have to go to market and buy a lot," she said hurriedly; "I have n't half the things for such a dinner."

"Don't you think," I suggested respectfully,

"that perhaps, just this first day, — considering that I am raw, — it would be better to have some broiled chops and some baked potatoes, and perhaps a salad of nice fresh lettuce dressed with oil and vinegar? You might buy a sweet of some sort at the bake shop, you know, and with coffee that would —"

"The very thing!" cried Mrs. Ely. "And do you know, Anne, it will be our very first dinner all alone. We'll go right away and buy the chops and lettuce and things, and I'll help. I just love to cook, only at home Hannah never wanted me to come in the kitchen. She was as cross as two sticks whenever I tried to make things; or else she'd flatter and say, 'Law, Miss Gladys, yo' pa don't want you to sile your purty white fingers in dis yer kitchen, nohow.' But I can come in *my* kitchen whenever I want to, and cook too. I'm glad you're raw, Anne. It will be lots nicer for me."

And so we presently set forth with an infinitesimal basket, out of which my young mistress hastily turned a tangle of silks and half-finished pieces of embroidery. We had just rounded the corner when Mrs. Ely stopped short with a

little cry of surprise and pleasure. "Oh, Anne, there's Mr. Ely coming; you'll have to get the things alone. You know how, I'm sure. I should think five pounds of chops would be enough, shouldn't you? and half a dozen potatoes. Here's my purse, Anne. Dick probably wants me to take a walk with him."

She hurried away with a dazzling display of smiles and dimples to meet the tall, blond young fellow who was tramping up the street with his hat drawn low on his forehead, and, it seemed to me, a troubled look on his handsome face.

As I contemplated the dainty, silver-mounted purse which my mistress had left in my hand, I remembered that the subject of references had not been so much as mentioned between us.

I may be raw, but I at least knew better than to follow Mrs. Ely's parting directions. It was a surprisingly pleasant task to select the articles for that first dinner of theirs. I did it *con amore*, and climbed the stairs to my new home with a positive glow in the region of my solar plexus, which no amount of previous concentration had been able to produce.

CHAPTER VII

LOVE stories have never interested me in the least. I associate them with a warm, scented atmosphere, — how I loathe Florida water! — soft-cushioned chairs, and little gushes of sentimental tears. Aunt Nugent has read thousands of them, I verily believe. This fact in itself would prevent me from ever reading one.

Perhaps it is this primal freshness of my emotions which makes this, my first love story, so interesting. My little mistress has evidently been unaccustomed to being much alone, so after Mr. Richard Ely has finally said good-by in the morning, — this sometimes takes a long time, — she quite naturally gravitates to the kitchen, as indeed it is right and proper for a careful mistress to do. I, of course, require a great deal of looking after, since I am raw and only the twelve-dollar kind at that.

Mrs. Ely encourages me by praising my suc-

cesses; over my failures, and I must confess to a number, she merely makes an adorable little mouth and advises me to hide their shortcomings in the decent obscurity of the corrugated iron receptacle which the janitor's assistant empties of a morning. My conscience is pricking me at this moment by reason of a sponge-cake, compounded from nine eggs and other ingredients, which absolutely refused to sponge—this with eggs at thirty-five cents the dozen.

“Hannah's sponge-cake always rose way up to the very top of the pan,” observed my mistress, mournfully contemplating the ruins. “And it smelt so good and lemony. Daddy liked it, and I just know Dick would, too.” She relapsed into a sort of a reverie in which her eyes shone so bright that I was not surprised when a minute later she burst into a little trill of laughter. “Daddy used to think me a regular baby—even after I was seventeen,” she said with a reminiscent air. “He never let me go out alone; but Dick saw me lots of times out driving. He used to ride; and oh, how handsome he does look on a horse! A tall, brown horse, Anne;

and he always wore the darlinest riding-boots and the cutest caps."

I was listening with the carefully disguised interest which I conceived to be respectful; but she stopped short and began to pull the tins about in the cupboard. "I am going to regulate this pantry, Anne," she said with an attempt at sternness. "And when I have done, you must be careful to keep it neat. Will you, Anne?"

"Yes, ma'am," I responded gravely. "I will try."

"Dick and I bought these dear little scalloped pans because they reminded us of a day we wouldn't forget for worlds," observed Mrs. Ely, presently, turning her bright face from a tender contemplation of some fluted muffin-tins. "You know Dick—I mean Mr. Ely—could n't think at first how to get acquainted with me; but of course after he made up his mind, it just *had* to happen. Don't you think there's a great deal in that, Anne?"

"Yes, ma'am, I do," I replied truthfully. "Shall I make an omelet or some creamed potatoes for your lunch, ma'am?"

"Yes, please, Anne ; you really do them very well now. And do you suppose you could bake some scalloped cakes in these pans? I should like to have them on the sideboard when Dick comes home. I wonder if he'll remember—yes, it is exactly six months ago to-day, Anne. Our rector's wife was giving a garden-party for the church, and daddy let me go. I wore a sweet white dress and a broad hat trimmed with pink roses ; I was standing under a tree near a tea-table. There were a lot of scalloped cakes on it—I always remembered that—and just then I saw Dick—I mean Mr. Ely—coming in at the gate. Oh, Anne, I forgot all about my pudding! Why did n't you make me remember?"

The hastily opened oven disclosed the melancholy and smoking ruins of a faultless meringue which had crowned a suspiciously lumpy pudding, the creation of the little lady's own dainty hands. "That's what comes of being raw," I said humbly. "It was my fault."

"No, it was mine," contradicted Mrs. Richard Ely, winking hard to keep the big tears from spilling quite over. "And it was such a delicious

pudding, too. I know Dick would have liked it."

She sat down by the window then and read solemnly in the cook-book for at least fifteen minutes; a passing glance revealed the subject which was bringing so perplexed a frown to her smooth forehead. I afterward perused the page myself. It was headed: "Advice to Young Housekeepers on the Management of Servants." It began thus: "*Never* linger in your kitchen for the purpose of conversing with a servant. *Nothing* is more derogatory to your own dignity or more fatal to good discipline. Give your directions clearly and simply, commenting briefly on what has been well accomplished, and more briefly still on what displeases you. An impertinent or unruly servant is the proper complement of an unwise mistress."

Now I am neither impertinent nor unruly. But being raw, there is no telling what I might become, so my mistress has been very short and crisp in her communications to me for several days. Yesterday she cried for a whole hour in her room quite alone, and later came out to the

kitchen arrayed for the street. "Anne," she said statelily, "I am going out for a walk. You may clean the windows in the parlor this afternoon, Anne; and—" her brown eyes wandering uncertainly about my neat kitchen—"I am sorry to see your faucets soapy, Anne; don't let it happen again."

She seemed very much pleased with herself after saying this, and beamed upon me with one of her sweetest smiles. "Do you ever get homesick, Anne?" she asked.

"No, ma'am," I answered. "Do y—" I bit off the question just in time, and why indeed should I ask it?

Mr. Richard Ely is a tall, broad-shouldered young man with a clear-cut, straight-featured face and honest, gray eyes. He seems to me very like a big boy; though of late when he looks at his pretty wife certain grim lines creep out about his mouth and chin which make him look much older.

Mrs. Ely noticed this to-day. I had just been changing the plates, and the door was not quite closed behind me. "Don't look at me like that,

Dick," she said; "you're not cross exactly, but I do believe you'd like to eat me instead of the salad — Anne makes such good salad, too."

The young man's laugh sounded a trifle forced (in the kitchen). I heard him get up from his chair and walk around the table. Then I knew without seeing or hearing that her pretty head was on his arm, and that he was whispering in her pink ear.

I coughed discreetly — I had forgotten the cheese — and he went back to his place, laughing without any pretence this time.

Afterward, when I was washing the dishes, Mr. Ely came into the kitchen whistling carelessly. He said he wanted a glass of water, but stopped me when I would have fetched it for him. "You seem a good sort, Anne," he said, his eyes resting upon me with a frankly inquiring gaze which yet conveyed the impression of a real anxiety.

"I hope so, sir, I am sure," I said with a decent self-respect.

"Well, I wish — Confound it all!" He stopped short to bite his mustache savagely. "The fact

is, Anne, Mrs. Ely does n't know much about housekeeping, you know, and I'll not have her bothered; but I — now, I hope you're as sensible as you look, and won't fly off at a tangent. The long and short of it is, that we're spending too much on our housekeeping. Don't you suppose you could — ”

“Economize?” I suggested.

“Yes, that's it; sort of cut down a trifle, don't you know. I don't care about kickshaws myself, and I guess that's what counts.” He was feeling in his pocket with visible embarrassment as he spoke. “Don't mention this to Mrs. Ely,” he added, and depositing a silver dollar on the table somewhat precipitantly retired.

Half an hour later Mrs. Ely appeared in the kitchen door. I had never seen her look so radiant. “I am going out with Mr. Ely, Anne,” she said. “We shan't be home till late, because we're going to the opera, — I've been just dying to hear Calvé all my life. Good-by, Anne. You need n't sit up for us.”

The silver dollar still lay on the table. I picked it up tranquilly and put it away.

My young mistress came in from a shopping expedition this morning in great spirits. "I just love to buy pretty things," she observed, as I helped her off with her jacket. "Oh, Anne, you've no idea of the bargains! I bought the sweetest waist this morning, not a bit showy nor loud, but just lovely. It was a Joubert waist, just reduced from fifty dollars to twenty-five. It would have been a sin not to take it; but I was puzzled for a minute to know how to manage. I only had five dollars and fifty cents in my purse — Dick gave it to me this morning for the housekeeping. But the shopkeeper was just as polite and accommodating as could be; he said he would take the five dollars and send the waist this evening — I can't think how—it reminded me of fish, I know."

"Do you mean C. O. D?" I asked.

"Yes, that's it; but then I only had fifty cents left, you see—just enough for carfare, after I bought my violets. Afterward, I remembered about the dinner. Isn't it ridiculous, Anne? How Dick will laugh at me when I tell him." She went away singing, while I rehearsed the rôle of Old Mother Hubbard.

"Don't bother about the dinner, Anne," said Mrs. Ely from the sink where she was arranging her violets in a bowl of fresh water. "We shan't mind going out to a restaurant for once."

I remembered my *pourboire*. "Mr. Ely left a dollar with me, ma'am, for — for the housekeeping," I said.

"He did!" said my mistress, in a surprised tone. "Why, how odd of Dick. I wonder how he came to think of such a thing?"

"Mr. Ely said he did n't want you bothered, ma'am," I replied mendaciously.

"Well, perhaps it 's lucky he did it this once," observed my mistress, with a displeased lifting of her eyebrows; "but I shall tell him I like to be bothered with my own housekeeping."

Then we forgot our mutual embarrassment in the fun of getting up a dollar dinner, after the pattern of an elaborate menu in the cook-book. It was a very good dinner, too; Mr. Richard Ely enjoyed it unaffectedly. "You are growing into the cleverest little housekeeper, dear," he told her, as he helped himself to cheese.

Mrs. Ely's bright eyes sparkled with mischief.

"When we're quite finished, Dick," she said, "I have the very funniest thing to tell you about this dinner. We should have been dining in a restaurant to-night, sir, if you had n't been foolish enough to leave that dollar with Anne. I'm going to lecture you about it too, afterward. Don't you know I like to be bothered — *for you?*?"

Mr. Ely cast a slightly reproachful glance at me — I was removing the crumbs. "I don't think I understand, Gladys," he said gravely.

"No, of course you don't, dear boy," responded Mrs. Ely, dimpling.

Just then a loud step sounded in the passage. "Dear me," pouted my mistress, "I do hope it is n't that stupid man with my new waist before I have time to tell you the joke. But you might as well open the door, Dick, while Anne fetches the pudding."

I am sure I don't know why, but something prompted me to consume an unconscionable time in removing the pudding from its mould and dishing up the sauce. When I finally brought it smoking hot into the dining-room my young mistress and master had disappeared altogether. So



"'YOU ARE GROWING INTO THE CLEVEREST LITTLE HOUSEKEEPER,
DEAR,' HE TOLD HER."

had the man who brought the parcel. I hesitated for a moment, then ventured to tap lightly on the closed door of the little parlor. "The pudding is served, ma'am," I said softly.

CHAPTER VIII

HERE I am at home once more, and I will confess to begin with that it seems perfectly delightful. I am sure it never occurred to me before to be the least bit grateful for such commonplace articles as porcelain bath-tubs, well-made hair mattresses -- yes, and smooth, clean, linen sheets and soft, white blankets. I even sat for a whole hour in one of the most cushiony chairs in Aunt Nugent's sitting-room, while she plaintively rehearsed the circumstances of Dr. Gallatin's recent engagement to Lucy Brandon.

"It was announced only yesterday," sighed Aunt Nugent; "it was such a painful surprise to me, my love, that I could scarcely have slept a wink all night if it had not been for dear 'Dr. Pilkington's Evening Reflections.' I had Susan set the reading-lamp right at the bedside, and I'm sure I must have stayed awake full half an hour before I was calm and resigned. Why didn't you come home before, dear Anne?"

"I could n't," I replied seriously; "I was having such a good time."

"You look it," acquiesced Aunt Nugent, shaking her head mournfully. "Well, I'm sure I ought to rejoice if you can view the matter in that light. But when I reflect, my love, on what *might* have been, it is hard for me to be reconciled."

"Of all sad words of tongue or pen,

The saddest are these, it might have been!"

I quoted irreverently. Then we went out for a drive, and I enjoyed it more than I ever enjoyed a drive in my life. I don't remember that I have noticed before how comfortable the carriage is. And Winston looked so handsome and dignified on the box. He was perfectly delighted to see me, though of course he didn't dare say so. Dear old fellow, I have raised his wages. Aunt Nugent declares that it is perfectly absurd. Perhaps it is, but it seems to me that faithful service like Winston's cannot be paid for in money.

Mr. Hilton said something of the sort when he gave me my month's wages. Mr. Hilton is Mrs. Ely's father. I told him that I did not deserve a whole month's wages since I had only been

in the place three weeks, and, besides, I had frequently been wasteful.

He looked at me so sharply that I regretted my expansive honesty; I fear it is n't after the usual custom of the shelf.

"Do you know," he said slowly, "that you remind me strongly — very strongly, in fact — of an old college friend of mine? The name is the same, too, — Smith. John Smith was his name. If it were not for the fact that he died a very wealthy man, I should be inclined to ask you some questions."

As it was he did put me through a species of civil-service examination, and ended by inviting me to travel in Europe with Mrs. Ely in the capacity of lady's maid. They are all going abroad for a year. Of course I refused; my experiments on the kitchen plane do not include a sojourn in foreign parts.

I wonder just how long I should have remained with the Elys if it had not been for that Joubert waist. I certainly had no intention of leaving when my mistress bade me "go away," after I had announced the pudding. She was crying

bitterly, I could hear that, and I deliberately — yes, deliberately and without a blush — listened at the door till I heard Mr. Richard Ely say, in that deep, boyish bass of his: “Don’t cry so, darling little wife. Of course you did n’t know, sweetheart — I could n’t bear to tell you. I thought I could manage it some way so you would n’t find out what a beggar you had married. But I shan’t always be one, dear.”

I went away then, and carefully put the pudding in the safe. It would do, I thought, for tomorrow’s dinner. Then I took the cook-book and set myself to study the chapter on domestic economy as I never studied it before. I served hash on toast for breakfast for the next three mornings, and the two of them partook of it meekly, though I afterward learned a better way of disposing of left-overs.

The leave-taking was very protracted indeed that day, and Mrs. Ely did not come to the kitchen for a long time afterwards. This made me a little uneasy, so after a while I contrived an errand to the parlor. There sat my little mistress, her sweet face drooped over a lapful of

multi-colored socks, one of which she was laboriously mending with embroidery silk. She looked up with a startled blush when I tapped on the half-open door. "Oh, Anne," she said plaintively, "do you know how to darn stockings? This hole looks awfully queer to me now I've sewed it up. The housekeeper always used to do our mending. Mother died when I was a tiny baby, you know, so I didn't learn ever so many things that I ought to have learned. I don't believe daddy thought I would ever need to know anything about work. But I do, Anne, and I shall have to try as hard as I can to learn."

Now it chanced that fine darning is one of my few accomplishments. Aunt Nugent, who is an exquisite needlewoman, insisted upon that much. How I used to detest the hours spent in her room! I was distinctly glad now that I was mistress of the womanly art. The "queer-looking hole" was first reduced to its normal dimensions; then I gave the little lady her first lesson in darning. She was pathetically grateful, and followed me out to the kitchen when the stockings were finally put away in neat rolls.

"I don't know a bit more about cooking than I do about sewing," she sighed, pulling the cook-book toward her with a puzzled frown. "It seems to me cooking is harder to remember than even geometry — and I never understood the first word of that. I should think it might develop the mind just as well to learn useful things as a jumble of theorems and stuff that one forgets as soon as possible. Now you know a lot about useful things, Anne, and yet you look really educated. Indeed you do, Anne; Dick — I mean Mr. Ely — and I were talking about it yesterday, and Dick said he thought I was as lucky as could be to get you for twelve dollars. I think so too, and I mean to have you stay with us always, just as Hannah stays at home. Why, it would seem too queer for anything without Hannah. Daddy says she's a part of the furniture."

I began to meditate on the subject of "Daddy" as I looked at the sparkling little face bent over the cook-book. It is singular how often I am inclined to use the adjective "little" in connection with Mrs. Richard Ely. As I said in the beginning, she is tall — as tall as I, and I measure full

five feet eight inches. I think it must be because of the exquisite girlish slimness of her shape, and the delicacy of her features.

I rattled the plates loudly to hide my embarrassment while I put a question. "Will your father be coming to visit you soon, ma'am?" It was a decided impertinence, but I put a bold face on it. "I was thinking we ought to learn some new dishes, so if he came unexpectedly, we —"

Her face paled and quivered. "Oh, Anne," she breathed, "daddy does n't even know where I live."

I cut two slices of bread with deliberation.

"I — we — were married — rather unexpectedly to daddy, and — and — he was very angry with Dick. He sent me a letter to say — good-by." She was almost sobbing now, her face bent low over the cook-book.

"In that case," I said, calmly turning to the range with the toasting-fork, "I should write and invite him for a week's visit."

"Oh, Anne, *should* you?"

"Yes, ma'am, I certainly should. He'll be sure to want to see you by this time."

She stayed quietly in her own room after luncheon, and about three o'clock appeared at the kitchen door to tell me she was going out for a walk. "I decided — to take your advice, Anne," she turned back to say with a quivering smile, "and — and — Anne, would you — I mean, do you think — if I should n't tell Mr. Ely — until daddy comes, you know; just for a surprise — It would be a lovely surprise for Dick, would n't it?"

"I am sure of it," I assented gravely. "I should keep it for a surprise by all means."

Then I fell into a shameful state of trepidation, during which I broke the butter-dish and dented the best sauce-pan. Suppose the man won't come! Or suppose he should come in the guise of a roaring dragon to break up this dove-cote! I felt tolerably certain of one thing, and that was the surprise in store for Mr. Richard Ely.

On the fifth afternoon after my mistress mailed her letter, I was alone in the kitchen. Mr. and Mrs. Ely were out, and I was busy preparing the vegetables for dinner. There was a heavy step in the passage, and a sharp rat-tat sounded on the panels of the door. I opened it, thinking it might

be the woman with the laundry. A big, ruddy-faced, white-bearded man confronted me. "Hello!" he exclaimed. "Who's this?"

I knew him in a minute. "My mistress is out, sir," I said civilly. "Won't you walk in, if you please, sir?" I ushered him into the little parlor, where the first thing his eyes rested upon was a photograph of himself in golf clothes. Mrs. Ely had arranged violets beneath it in a tiny vase.

"Humph!" ejaculated the old gentleman, blowing his nose violently. "Guess I've struck the right place. Hold on, you—" I had begun to retreat kitchenward. "Who are *you*, anyhow?"

"I am Mrs. Ely's maid, sir," I replied, glad of my clean white apron and irreproachable collar.

"Well, well, well, upon my soul!" he exclaimed irrelevantly. "Where'd you say your mistress is?"

"She is out walking with Mr. Ely, sir."

At this he exploded violently under his breath, his face turning so purple that I was alarmed for an instant. "Does the puppy treat her well?" he demanded fiercely.

"I don't know what you mean, sir," I said with

tranquil stupidity; "there's no puppy about the place that I know of, sir."

The old gentleman burst with a great laugh, and, being seemingly restored to good humor by it, began a leisurely tour of inspection about the premises. "You can go about your business, my girl," he said to me. "And mind you get a good dinner; I'm as hungry as a hunter."

Not long afterward, when the rightful proprietors of the menage suddenly appeared in the kitchen, I almost upset the custard pudding.

"Why, Anne," exclaimed my young mistress, "did we startle you? We've brought home the prettiest little angel cake for dinner. It's Mr. Ely's birthday, and I'm going to put candles on it. Give me the candles, Dick."

She began sticking pink tapers about the edge of her cake, laughing childishly, while Mr. Ely watched her with a happier face than I had seen him wear for many days. Just then the door from the dining-room opened noisily, and the ruddy-faced old man stepped into the kitchen. "Hello, sweetheart," he called out cheerfully; "is dinner 'most ready?"

Mr. Richard Ely's face was a study during the minute and a half that Mrs. Ely was lost to sight in a profusion of white whiskers and big arms. "Oh, daddy," she sobbed, "I never knew before how much I loved you!"

"It's just as I expected, then; this young jackanapes has been abusing you," growled the old man, glaring implacably at Mr. Richard Ely over his daughter's bent head.

"Why are you here, sir?" demanded the young man, his blue eyes flashing something very like fire.

"Why am I here, sir? Because I was invited, sir. Your wife here invited me to visit her. Did n't she ask your permission?"

"Oh, daddy," sighed Mrs. Ely, bestowing another rapturous kiss on the old gentleman's ruddy cheek, "please don't be absurd. I invited you for a surprise for Dick — and to think it's his birthday, too!"

The two men looked at each other carefully. Then both of them burst out laughing. "Are you surprised, sir?" roared the old gentleman.

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Richard Ely, "I am."

Of course they did n't stay in the kitchen after that, and I was glad of it; that kitchen was at best a tight fit for four, and I wanted it all to myself just then. My dinner was a perfect success. I served it with an honest pride and pleasure which I shall never forget.

I have come to the conclusion that the only knowledge worth having is usable knowledge *used*. Any other sort quickly becomes dusty rubbish.

I have been at home two weeks to-day. What, after all, was the good of my late experiments? I find that I am more dissatisfied than ever. Once, when I was a little girl, I remember driving out with Aunt Nugent. Something happened to the carriage, and we were forced to stop for an hour while a blacksmith put it to rights. There was a cottage just across the road, shut off from the street by a flowering hedge. After a little I ventured to look through the hedge, and saw two children playing at tea-party under an apple tree. I had never played at tea-party under an apple tree in my life, so

I stood there peeping enviously till Aunt Nugent called me away.

“Wait just a minute, aunty,” I begged; “I want to see them eat their round cake.” But I was n’t allowed, and presently rolled away in the carriage feeling distinctly injured.

If one cannot have a round cake for one’s self, it may be sorry comfort to look on at another’s feast. But it is something everybody wants to do just the same.

CHAPTER IX

THE kitchen shelf draws me with a curious but wholly irresistible fascination. I must be perfectly honest with myself, however well it would sound to affirm that I am returning to it because of a profound interest in sociological reform. Aunt Nugent attributes my desire to go away a second time to ill-concealed chagrin over Dr. Gallatin's easy resignation to fate and the rather mature charms of Lucy Brandon. "My poor, *dear* child," she said, regarding me with moistened spectacles, "do let aunty go with you and help you to bear it."

"Bear what, aunt?" I inquired tartly.

"You should n't try to hide anything from *me*, my love," she sighed. "I have learned to read between the lines."

I laughed disagreeably, and went on with my packing. I am performing this duty myself, to Lizzie's manifest annoyance.

"I hope you will write me more frequently than you did last time," went on Aunt Nugent. "Your letters are always so unsatisfactory; they are more like letters from one's man of business, I am sure, than from a young lady to a female relative. Letter-writing, my child, is fast becoming one of the lost arts."

I abjectly promised all sorts of impossibilities, and finally got away in the edge of the evening, which kindly concealed the shortcomings of my travelling costume from interested eyes. Mrs. Buckle was unaffectedly glad to see me. I am to work for my board as heretofore while suiting myself with a place.

Mrs. Buckle says I am not at all stupid in the kitchen, and I really wait on the table to perfection. Nobody at Mrs. B.'s table appreciates my skill, however. To quote the good lady's own words, "All they wants is to eat and git." The boarders are mostly factory and shop girls, with a sprinkling of respectable "single gents"—mechanics and the like. I find there are well-established social lines in Mrs. Buckle's estab-

lishment as elsewhere. For example, the black-haired, red-cheeked young woman who occupies Mrs. Buckle's second-story front all by herself is a very fashionable person indeed. She is a forewoman—I mean lady—in a stocking factory, and looks down from her exalted eminence upon the humbler toilers who sleep in the many-bedded back rooms.

Miss Stella Kimbark—for such is the forelady's name—is wonderfully small about the waist, which seems indeed curiously to divide her person into sections like an insect. The upper division sustaining a great quantity of beads, fringes, and glittering pins variously disposed upon its rotund surface; the lower division exhibiting a vast quantity of swishing, rustling, be-ruffled, and befrilled draperies.

Miss Kimbark scowls at me haughtily while ordering me to fill her glass, or to pass her plate for pie. More frequently she does not see me at all, even when I venture a humble “good morning” with the daily paper, subscribed for by all the boarders, but invariably laid at Miss Kimbark's place on the breakfast table. The

young woman, if she happens to be in a good humor, will frequently entertain the entire table with spicy bits culled from the fashion or society columns.

"Say, ladies and gents," she announced this morning, "I am truly grieved to say that pompadours are goin' out for sure; it's the proper caper now to part your hair in the middle and do it up in a bun, with smashin' big hair-pins. It ain't a bit becomin' to yours truly, an' I sh'll stick to my frizzed pomp. What's good enough for the royal princesses of England is good enough for me."

Even brute atoms are said to revolve in circles about a central point. Speaking of atoms, it gives one an odd feeling to regard a cracked tea-cup or a greasy dish-cloth and conceive of it as composed of systems of atoms in active rotary motion. After all, what is the good of being any sort of an atom?

I asked Mrs. Buckle to-day if she thought life was worth living; the two of us were washing dishes in the murky kitchen in an atmosphere heavily charged with greasy mutton, fried pan-

cakes, and yellow soap. Mrs. Buckle has undoubtedly passed the greater part of her life in a similar environment. It gives one an odd complexion.

"Now don't you go to gettin' down-hearted, Annie," she said kindly. "I'm perfec'ly willin' to keep you right along, now 't you're gettin' broke to harness. I guess I c'd afford to give you as much as a dollar 'n' a half a week an' your board. You ain't a bit like some o' the girls I've tried to keep, an' that 's right. Gracious, I got so wore out with 'em 'at I'd about give up keepin' help."

I thanked the good woman, and told her I would certainly stay till I was suited with a place. "But you haven't answered my question," I insisted.

"You won't be askin' it long, I'll bet," she chuckled. "Let a girl get a holt of a steady beau an' she knows life 's worth livin' all right."

"But I have n't a beau," I said honestly. "I never had one."

"Well, you 'll have one now if you ain't too terrible toppin'. Ain't you got no eyes for Joey? He 's

fell head over heels in love with you. But the 's times, Annie, when you cert'nly do put on awful airs; I've noticed it. I dunno where you ever learnt 'em; but airs don't go down with honest lads like Joey — 'specially as you ain't really pretty."

"Who is Joey?" I inquired.

"Why, land! Ain't you found out who Joey Larkins is? He sets acrost the table from Stella Kimbark, an' he *has* kep' comp'ny with her off an' on. Stella's ready to eat you alive now, — so Emma Pollock tol' me; an' you kin bet 'at Emma knows."

That same evening I made an errand about the water-pitcher to Miss Kimbark's apartment. It was just before supper. The forewoman of the stocking factory stood by the flaring gas-jet examining her complexion in a hand-glass with a slightly dissatisfied air. She stared at me with a frown that drew her black brows in a straight line across her face. "Put down that pitcher," she commanded sharply, "an' come here."

I obeyed.

"Now, then," began Miss Kimbark, coolly, "I

want you should explain yourself. Where 'd you come from? An' what are you up to here? Don't lie, now." Her angry black eyes pierced like a knife.

"What business is it of yours?" I retorted, tossing my head.

She interrupted with a stamp of her foot: "Drop that, with me; drop it, I say! You ain't what you pretend to be, I know that much. Now, what you doin' here?"

"How should you know anything about me?"

Miss Kimbark laughed loudly. "How should I know anything about you," she repeated derisively. "Well, if you really want to know, I'll tell you. I've been in your room, miss, an' overhauled yer togs."

"How dare you do such a thing?" I asked.

"How dare I? Why, I don' know as it took such an awful sight of darin' on my part," sneered the lady. "I jus' toddled right in yer apartment an' made myself to home, that's the way I done it. I've got a key that fits most locks that comes my way, an' I ain't afraid to use it neither."

"Well, what then?"

"I read your book. The impert'ence of you to be starin' at yer betters the way you done. I c'd slap yer face fer you, Miss Big-eyes; makin' pretty mouths at the boarders, an' perkin' up yer chin. I got on to the fact 'at you had n't worked fer yer livin' first thing I seen you. Yer hands must ha' been tended awful careful, I sh'd say, to keep 'em like that. Look at them nails, now."

"Suppose I do take care of my finger-nails," I said coolly, "and suppose I like to write what I think about people in a blank-book. What do you propose to do about it?"

She stared at me for a full minute before replying. "Say, I ain't on to your curves yet, whoever you be," she finally remarked. "But never mind, I'd like to know one thing. Are you struck on Joey Larkins?"

"No," I answered promptly and truthfully. "I want to get away from here, anyhow; I want another place."

"What kind of a place?"

"Any kind," I answered recklessly, "except general housework."

"I can get you a place easy enough," said Miss Kimbark, with a touch of pitying scorn. "Law, I c'd get fifty places to do most anything by to-morrow night. I ain't no patience with folks that get out of work. The trouble with most folks is 'at they 're as limp as a dish-rag. There 's more work to do 'an there is folks to do it—real live folks, I mean."

I bowed before Miss Kimbark's superior poise. She is the sort of a girl who would prevail on almost any shelf in the china-closet. If she had been born in my place, for example, she would have adjusted herself to her inherited niche without the slightest difficulty, and she would not have made herself and other people vastly uncomfortable by being "different."

I am beginning to think that being "different" is merely the outcropping of an insidious sort of pride. I must have *wanted* to be different or I could not possibly have been so.

Well, I acknowledge it. I *did* want to be different. I *do* want to be different. I *am* different. So there! And I will be myself, I don't care what happens.

I have had a brand-new experience, and I am so shaken up by it that I feel like a kaleidoscope just before the bits of colored glass form into a new figure.

Mrs. Buckle sent me to the grocery on an errand just after supper. It is only a short walk, and I have never felt the least afraid on similar occasions. I had hardly left the house when I heard a heavy step on the sidewalk behind me, and foolishly quickened my pace. Almost in a moment I was overtaken, and to my horror felt an arm passed lightly about my shoulders. I stifled a scream and wrenched myself away.

"Don't you be scared of me, little Annie," murmured a big, rumbling voice. "Did you s'pose Joey Larkins was a-goin' to take it out in just a-lookin' at your sweet face for evermore? You kin jus' bet he ain't that kind."

"What do you mean?" I said stupidly, being really too frightened to think.

Mr. Larkins here endeavored to possess himself of my hand in a proprietary manner. "I guess you ain't nobody's fool," he said confidently. "Honest now, didn't you know I was dead gone

on you? I know you did, you little sinner, the ol' lady tol' me so to-night. It was I 'at coaxed her to sen' you out for beans."

Mr. Larkins paused to indulge in a joyous burst of laughter. He was a big, fresh-colored young fellow, with a crop of light-brown curling hair and the bluest eyes I ever saw. I am almost ashamed to tell it, but I really felt a thrill of gratified vanity when he looked down at me from his six feet two of brawn and muscle.

"I want you should keep comp'ny with me, Annie," he went on in a lower tone, "an' no foolin' 'bout it, neither. I 'm gettin' good wages reg'lar, an' I 've ben thinkin' of settlin' down for more 'n a year. I 'll tell yo' fair an' honest, girl, that I kind of took a notion to Stella Kimbark before you come; but do you know, Annie, for all you ain't half as handsome as Stella, there's somethin' 'bout you — Well, dash it all, you — you 're *different*, an' —"

The familiar adjective helped me to collect my dazed senses. "You are very kind, Mr. Larkins," I said decidedly, "but I—I could n't—" I paused in an effort to remember the singular

phrase the young man had used. He had certainly not proposed marriage.

"Could n't nothin'," interrupted Mr. Larkins, roughly. "You'll keep comp'ny with me, that's what you'll do, and come Easter we'll get married, an' that's right."

"But I don't want to get married," I murmured. "Go away, please, and don't talk to me any more."

"Look a 'ere," said the young fellow, seizing me by one wrist. "You don't know me very well, Annie, but I c'n tell you I'm no softy, an' you can't scare me. When I make up my mind, I makes it up. You're the girl for me, an' I know it. We'll wait till Fourth of July, if you say so, but not another minute. That day'll see you Mrs. Joey Larkins, an' don't you forgit it. That's Joey short and sharp, business every time; but you won't be sorry, girl; I love you true, an' I'll stan' 'twixt you an' the world every trip. I will, honest."

His big voice trembled and so did his big hand. I was curiously torn between real gratitude and a wild desire to laugh at the absurdity of the whole

thing. The gratitude conquered the laughter before I opened my mouth to reply. At last I had a lover — a real lover, who loved *me*! And that is something to be grateful for on any shelf of the china-closet. “Joey,” I began, — the name falling quite naturally from my lips, — “you don’t know anything about me, besides, I am too old for you; I am twenty-seven.”

The young fellow drew back a little and stared hard at me. “I don’t believe it,” he blurted out at last. “You — you can’t be! Why, I’m only twenty, an’ see how awful big I am. I don’t care how old you are, anyhow.”

“Yes, you do,” I said firmly; “you don’t want to marry a middle-aged woman. Go back to Stella Kimbark, she —”

The allusion was unfortunate. A fierce crimson surged up into Mr. Larkins’s big face; the veins on his forehead swelled. “I might ha’ knowed it,” he muttered. Then he turned on me in a sort of blind fury. “I said I’ll have you,” he muttered between set teeth. “An so I will, for all of —”

His sentence was never finished. A huge bulk

of shadow moved swiftly betwixt us, and Joey Larkins was whirled violently off to one side.

“Let go the girl, you hulking fool!” said a strong, unfamiliar voice.

I did not wait to hear what followed, but hurried away as fast as I could. I suppose the proper and sensible thing for me to do is to go back to Aunt Nugent at once; but I am positively consumed with curiosity to see what will happen next.

CHAPTER X

WHEN a young woman deliberately turns her back on what she clearly recognizes as the right and proper course of action, in order that she may see what will happen next, it is hard to predict her future.

At this critical juncture in Anne Smith's career, Fate, in the person of Miss Kimbark, took a hand.

Contrary to her custom, that lady was sulkily silent at the breakfast table. She paid no heed to the folded newspaper at her elbow, but stole an occasional curious glance toward the person who sat at the end of the table, silently consuming a breakfast of fried eggs, corn bread, and coffee.

He was a tall, powerful man ; and the observant Miss Kimbark noted further that his complexion was freckled, his hair and beard reddish and abundant, his teeth white and even, and his

eyes hidden behind disfiguring spectacles of a bluish tint.

"Humph!" muttered Miss Kimbark, as she stirred her coffee thoughtfully. After breakfast the young woman sought and obtained a brief interview with Mrs. Buckle.

"My, but you are a 'umner!" observed Mrs. Buckle, admiringly, when Miss Kimbark had put a few searching questions. "'E's been 'ere more 'an a week now, 'e 'as; an' they ain't one of you girls so much as looked at 'im before. But 'e's a real gent'man, that 'e is, even if 'e don't 'and-some much. 'E's workin' in the foundry."

"Foreman?" inquired Miss Kimbark.

"No, I guess 'e ain't," said Mrs. Buckle, shaking her head regretfully. "'Is name's Willyum — Willyum Brown. I always liked the name of Willyum, 'count of Buckle. Now don't you go to fascinatin' of 'im, an' break 'is 'eart the way you done with Joey."

Miss Kimbark tossed her head. "I guess Joey ain't the only pebble on the beach," she observed haughtily.

That evening when Mr. William Brown entered

the dining-room, Miss Kimbark was discovered languishing in the one extra chair which the room afforded. The foundry-man stumbled awkwardly over the lady's voluminous draperies in a vain attempt to reach his place, then drew back, looking startled and discomfited.

"Law, never you mind a misstep, Mr. Brown," exclaimed Mrs. Buckle, genially, who chanced to dart into the room at that very minute. "Stella, she's awful good-natured; ain't you, Stella? But I donno as I've thought to interduce you two. Mr. Willyum Brown, le' me make you 'quainted with Miss Stella Kimbark. Miss Stella Kimbark—Mr. Willyum Brown. There now, you c'n settle it 'twixt yourselves."

Miss Kimbark acknowledged the introduction with a sweeping bow, which produced a magnificent jingling sound among the decorations of her person. "I'm glad t' make yer 'quaintance, Mr. Brown, I'm sure," she said in her genteelest manner.

Mr. Brown stared at Miss Kimbark for an instant, then, muttering something unintelligible, again attempted to gain his place.

The lady prevented this with practised ease.

"Why are you in such a hurry to eat, Mr. Brown?" she inquired coquettishly. "*She* ain't brought in the hash yet." The slight accent on the pronoun, and the meaning smile which accompanied it, seemed quite lost on the man. After a pause Miss Kimbark added in a low tone: "Say, I seen what you done to Joey las' night, an' I like to ha' died laughin'. My, wa 'n't he s'prised, though!"

"Insolent puppy!" growled Mr. Brown, coloring shamefacedly.

"No, he ain't," giggled Miss Kimbark; "he's a nice boy, Joey is, only he don't know his mind. *She's* a queer one, though; I can't make her out worth a cent. Think of her now a-writin' down in a book a lot of stuff 'bout me. Like 'nough she'll put you in next."

Mr. Brown seemed suddenly interested. "Who is *she*?" he asked, folding his big hands on the back of the chair nearest him. Miss Kimbark's eyes followed the movement absent-mindedly; then she burst into a shrill laugh. "My, if that ain't 'nough to kill corn!" she exclaimed with

piquant irrelevance. In a lower tone she added: "I'll show you her book some day if you'd like to see it; I know how to get a holt of it. Hush, here she comes now."

Annie Smith entered, bearing two covered dishes, and Miss Kimbark dismissed Mr. Brown with a practised wave of the hand; then sinking haughtily into her place, she beckoned the menial to approach. "That's him as knocked Joey out last night," she whispered loudly. "His name's Brown; he's a foundry-man, an' a real gent'man."

Annie Smith crimsoned indignantly. But her eyes turned upon the big man at the end of the table. He was quietly occupied with a cup of tea which Mrs. Buckle had just handed him, and apparently heard nothing.

Mistress and maid were washing dishes in the foggy kitchen that night when the excellent Mrs. Buckle took it upon herself to administer some wholesome counsel to the young person whom she considered under her charge.

"I don't want for to be nosey," she began with an illustrative sniff, "but I've been kind of wonderin' 'bout you, Annie, ever since you come 'ere.

You ain't no common workin' girl, I see that right off. Is your pa a-livin'?"

"No," answered Anne, "he died when I was fourteen."

"An' yer ma?"

"She died when I was born."

"Who brung you up?"

"A distant relative of my mother's."

"There wa' n't no love lost there, I c'n see that," observed Mrs. Buckle, sagaciously. "Well, she fetched you up like a lady, any'ow. Not that I think she 'd ought to 'ave done that. She 'd ought to 'ave learned you how to work an' take care of yourself. You 're willin' and useful 'nough, but you ain't, so to say, got *sprawl*. There ain't nothin' like *sprawl* to get folks ahead in the world. That was the endurin' trouble with Buckle. 'E could n't never get nowhere with 'is work; if there was anybody laid off, it was sure to be 'im. 'E used to say, 'I ain't made for luck, Car'line, so what 's the use of tryin'.' If anybody gets *that* idee fixed in their minds, they won't never be worth shucks to nobody."

"I guess that 's what 's the matter with me," said

Anne, meekly. "What would you do if you were in my place?" she added with unfeigned interest.

Mrs. Buckle had fallen upon the knives and was scouring them with an energy that approached a fine frenzy. "You 've got to git some sprawl first off," she enunciated briefly. "Think yer somebody, an' c'n do things, an' ye kin do 'em. I foun' that out in less 'n a year after I'd married Buckle; I hed to. An' another thing I foun' out was that folks don't think no more o' you 'an you think o' yourself. If you go 'round kind of meachin'-like, sayin', 'I ain't much of a cook, an' I can't do no washin', and so I 'm willin' to work for most anythin' you 'll give me,' why you c'n go on that-a-way till kingdom come, an' don't you forgit it. But if you perk up an' say, 'I 'm such awful good help that I c'n make my twenty dollars a month,' you gits it quick."

"But suppose a girl did n't care much about wages, but just wanted to be pretty and—and have people like her, and —"

Mrs. Buckle laughed so heartily that her artificial teeth became temporarily loosened in her mouth; she restored them to place with a strenu-

ous click. "You 'd ought to 've wanted all that ten years ago!" she ejaculated briskly. "But land, it ain't never too late to mend! Nex' time Stella Kimbark tosses 'er 'ead so 'igh and mighty at you, jes' you say to yourself, 'I'm 'andsome myself, that I am.' The gents I 've come acrost are all pretty much alike. If you git right down to it, you 'll see 'at they allers take the woman-folks at their own price-tickets. If you mark yerself a damidged article, to be sold cheap, you won't be run after by gents as is lookin' for a-number-one goods."

Of a Sunday the excellent Mrs. Buckle conducted her establishment after the manner of a good church woman, which she was. "Prayers never 'urt anybody as I knowed of, an' there ain't no tellin' what good they may do fer a body, if done reg'lar," she was wont to remark, piously. "I 'inders nobody, an' nobody 'inders me when it comes to church-goin'."

It came to pass, therefore, that Annie Smith, having elected to attend vespers one Sunday afternoon, found to her dismay that Mr. Joey Larkins occupied the pew directly in front of her. The

sinful desire to see what would happen next thus led quite inevitably to a second interview between the young woman and Mr. Larkins directly after service, in the process of which Miss Smith succeeded in convincing her youthful admirer that she could never become Mrs. Larkins.

"I'll bet I c'd make you good an' sorry," remarked the young man, gloomily. "Suppose I sh'd write down on a piece of paper that you won't have me, an' then go an' take pison — Paris green, or somethin' suddent. How'd you like that? They'd find the paper pinned to my cold corpse all right."

"I should n't like it," returned Anne, promptly. "Because I like you, Joey, and I am more grateful to you than you can understand; you are the only man who ever said that he loved me."

Mr. Larkins's blue eyes sparkled. "I'll bet a dollar I know a good thing when I see it all right — all right!" he said vaingloriously. "What's the matter with havin' me, then?"

"I've explained all that, you know," said Anne; "but remember I'm going to be a good friend of yours. Now you must say good-by and leave me,

for I wish to walk quite alone for an hour before I go back."

Joey Larkins obeyed without further protest. Within the hour he was led by a vagary of kindly fortune to interview Miss Kimbark.

"Seemed like I was back in the fourth grade," he said wonderingly, "an' she was the teacher; I did n't das to say no more."

At which Miss Kimbark stifled a singular sigh. "She ain't off our stripe, Joey," she said soberly. "But I 'm blamed if I don't kinder like her after all."

CHAPTER XI

STELLA KIMBARK informed me to-day that she had a place in view for me. "A reg'lar cinch, too," she added, "if you only had a nickel's worth of sprawl."

"What is sprawl?" I asked.

"Sprawl," explained Miss Kimbark, sarcastically, "means what you an' most other folks ain't got. It means reg'lar git-up-an'-go, if that suits you better; an' what's more, it means the knowin' how an' when to git up an' go."

"How would 'grasp' do?" I inquired.

"You think you're awful smart, don't you?" sneered Miss Kimbark.

"No, I don't," I said honestly. "I wish I did think so; Mrs. Buckle says that is what ails me. If I only thought I was smart, I would be. Do you believe that?"

Miss Kimbark rattled her spangles impatiently. "How should I know what *you'd* be," she ex-

claimed with fine scorn. "All I know is, you 're an awful fool to stay here drudgin' for Ma Buckle when you might be earnin' your sixteen a month. You c'n stay if you want to, though, for all of me," she added graciously.

The simplicity of the masculine idea on this particular shelf amazes me. It seems that Mr. Larkins, returning from church on Sunday afternoon, in a downcast and gloomy frame of mind not induced by the service, encountered Miss Kimbark on the steps of the boarding-house. Mrs. Buckle reported the crisis as follows:—

"'E made as tho' 'e was goin' to push right past 'er into th' 'ouse; but she ups an' says somethin' to 'im, with one o' them smiles of 'ern—an' you can't deny that Stella's 'andsome. Joey 'e kind of grinned, then off they starts for a stroll. When they come back, I c'd see they'd made it up betwixt 'em."

That same afternoon I had a queer adventure of my own. After bidding Mr. Larkins a final good-by, I started off at a brisk pace, half inclined to bring up in the dull and distant part of the city where Aunt Nugent is probably engaged at

this moment with Dr. Pilkington's "Sabbath Reflections." I had n't gone far, however, when it began to rain. I had no umbrella, and hesitated between calling a cab and going back into the church porch for shelter. I finally decided upon the latter course, chiefly because some curious interior sense persists in telling me that when I go back to my proper shelf this time, I must stay there.

I was congratulating myself upon my snug shelter from the downpour, when I saw that I was not alone. At first I did not recognize the tall man who stood in the shadow, leaning upon his stick. Then I saw that it was the big foundry-man who has lately come to Mrs. Buckle's to board. He surveyed me through his blue glasses for a minute, then said suddenly: "I've been wondering whether I made a stupid blunder in interfering with your—your love-making the other night. I was just coming home from work, and I fancied the fellow was annoying you; but perhaps that is where I was mistaken."

His voice is an unusual one for a working-man, deep and musical, yet not loud. I wonder if that is

the result of days passed amid the clang of iron and steel. One would not naturally suppose so. I said primly that I was much obliged to him for interfering. Then I grew uncomfortably warm as I remembered that I was actually discussing my one love affair with a strange man.

"Joey Larkins is a very nice person," I added defiantly.

"Then you do think I was impertinent?" said Mr. Brown, gravely.

"I — I don't think anything about you," I said, thoroughly vexed with myself and him. "Why should I?"

"Why, indeed?" echoed the foundry-man, pleasantly. He seemed very much amused at my display of temper. I could see his eyes twinkling behind his ugly blue glasses. "The young woman with all those rattling chains about her neck, Miss — ah, well, — never mind her name — told me something very interesting about you the other day."

"What did she tell you?" I asked absent-mindedly. I was wondering how soon I could escape from this big, impertinent workman.

"She told me that you write down in a book what you think about people. Please tell me why you thought of doing such a thing. And when did you begin it? I am doing something of the sort myself, and I find it very interesting."

"You do!" I exclaimed. "And what do you say about people?"

He smiled. "If you will answer my question, I will answer yours."

"I used to like to write things when I was in school," I answered truthfully enough. "After I got out of school I kept on. It amuses me."

"That's exactly the case with me," he said coolly. "Odd, isn't it?"

I was thinking it very singular, indeed. Are all foundry-men like "Willyum" Brown, I wonder? Of course our public schools turn out a very remarkable class of working people; but I never realized this so fully before. I wish I had gone to the public school. It struck me that this was really an excellent opportunity to improve my knowledge of the laboring classes. Perhaps the foundry-man was thinking the same thing—I dare say he reads the papers—for when I looked

up with a question of more or less inanity on the tip of my tongue, I found him gazing at me speculatively. I can't imagine why I should have laughed aloud at this; but I did, and after a pause Willyum Brown joined in. Very few men laugh well. But the foundry-man neither chuckled nor howled. He laughed, pleasantly and spontaneously. Then we both looked away, feeling rather foolish—at least I did. "I must be going," I said hastily.

"No, don't," said the foundry-man; "it's raining harder than ever. Besides, I want to know what you are going to put down in your book about me."

"I shall put down nothing about you," I said untruthfully.

At that moment a brougham rolled slowly down the street. I recognized the portly figure within as my ontological friend, Mrs. Van Deuser. She would scarcely have distinguished one of the submerged atoms of the masses, I know. Yet I drew back a little farther into the shadow.

The foundry-man glanced at the vehicle with

a frown. "Why should that woman ride in her carriage," he demanded roughly, "while you and I walk?"

"Because she has a carriage to ride in, I suppose," I answered. "I 'm sure I don't want to ride in her carriage, do you?"

"No, I do not," he said positively. "But here are you, a young, delicate girl, obliged to spend your life toiling in a kitchen, while the woman yonder probably does nothing at all. There's no justice in that."

"I 'm neither young nor delicate," I said shortly; "and it must be the most tiresome thing in the world to do nothing in particular."

"That's true enough," he answered argumentatively. "But did you never think how unequal things are in this world? And does it never occur to you to question your place in it? Do you, for example, like being a kitchen girl?"

I smothered a laugh behind my handkerchief. "I like it, I dare say, quite as well as you like being a foundry-man."

He seemed somewhat taken aback by my

reply, for he frowned and pulled savagely at his beard. Finally he shook his head.

"But I *don't* like being a foundry-man," he said decidedly. "The work's terribly hard and the pay small. The man who reaps the chief profits of the concern seldom comes near it. I have seen him once in a month's time, cool, smiling, and well dressed. I am no more to him than a greasy cog in the machinery. Do you call that just?"

I shrugged my shoulders. "The cog has to be there, has n't it? And why not you as well as another?"

"Because I am a man and not a cog," he said, breathing deep.

Then with a slight gesture of farewell he strode out into the rain and walked away.

Now I consider all this extremely interesting. I suppose the foundry-man represents his class very fairly. But he is a foundry-man because he ought to be one. He could n't possibly be anything else if he tried. Every man must gravitate to his own place as surely as the planets swing about the sun. Of this much I am convinced.

Willyum Brown has n't so much as looked at me for two days until to-night, and then he was obliged to do so. If I was as unprincipled as Stella Kimbark, I could have satisfied my curiosity to a degree this morning, for the big foundry-man dropped a brown-covered note-book from his pocket. I found it on the floor when I tidied up the dining-room. It was filled with close, crabbedly-written pages, this much I saw. Of course I did n't read any of it. When I returned it, I was sorry for a minute that I had not, for he pocketed it with a brief "Thank you," and fell to eating his supper with his usual appetite.

There was no one else in the room, for he was late. Presently he said coolly, "What did you think about it?"

"Think about what?" I asked.

He tapped his pocket. "I knew you would find it."

"Did you expect me to read it?"

"Why, certainly — after our conversation the other day."

"I did n't read it," I said decidedly.

"Why not?"

"I was too busy, for one thing. For another, I did n't care to."

He pulled off his blue spectacles absent-mindedly. "I'm glad you did not, on the whole," he said, eying me thoughtfully. "Women seldom think much as a rule, and it is probably quite as well that they do not, especially —"

I waited patiently to hear the conclusion of this well-worn masculine opinion, but it was not forthcoming. "Did you suppose," I asked pleasantly, "that anything you have written in that book could possibly make me think?"

"You are laughing at me," he said, with an air of surprise. "You are thinking that I must be too stupid to write a note-book because I am a foundry-man."

"And you," I retorted coolly, "are thinking that, because I am a kitchen-maid, I cannot properly appreciate your extreme cleverness."

"You are —" he observed after a long pause — "a very odd sort of a person. Will you kindly give me a glass of water?"

"Don't you think it is queer that Mr. Brown

reads so many books?" I asked Mrs. Buckle, in the murky privacy of the kitchen.

"Land, no!" she answered. "A single man like 'im is bound to take to somethin'. Some takes to drink an' some takes to books, as you may say. I 'ad one young man as took to photographin', an' that 's worse 'an either as fur as money goes. 'E could n't pay 'is board after a while, 'e could n't, an' I 'ad to fire 'im."

CHAPTER XII

THE foundry-man informed me to-day that he had two tickets for a concert in a mechanics' course, and invited me to go with him. Singularly enough, Miss Kimbark's giggle in the passage decided me.

"I will go," I said promptly, then swallowed difficult misgivings as to the propriety of my course all day.

"I wanted to talk with you, and there is no chance at Mrs. Buckle's," began Mr. Brown, with simplicity, as we walked away down the street.

He was looking the pink of working-man respectability; and I dare say I, in my well-worn ready-made suit, was a sufficiently genteel-looking workwoman.

"I'm not a Joey Larkins," he added quickly, with an amused smile.

I must have betrayed my real apprehensions in

some way, and his remark provoked me to reply untruthfully, "I was n't thinking of such a thing."

"I should like," he went on rapidly, "to really know you, — not in the way a workman like myself is apt to know a woman. You seem to me quite unlike the girls I have met before; and why should we not be friendly enough to talk over some of the things in which we are both interested — like two men, say? I don't intend to marry," he finished abruptly.

I was furiously angry for the moment, though I am sure I can't think why, now that I've had time to consider. "You take too much for granted," I said coldly.

"What do I take for granted that I ought not?" he demanded. "Is it too much for me to have judged you a woman who can talk upon social questions with a man without any nonsense about love and marriage? I tell you these questions must be talked over between men, and women too, who have cool heads and keen eyes. You have both. I know it."

"Well, and what of it?" I asked. "Suppose, for

the sake of argument, that I have acquired the most valuable collection of views on all sorts of questions, what good would it do the world for me to discuss them with you?"

"You don't understand," he said eagerly. "You are capable of seeing and thinking as few women of our class are, and it's of the greatest importance that you think and see right."

"That may be," I said, "but I don't see how you are going to direct my thoughts. And how can you be sure that you are right, anyway?"

"I *am* right," he said doggedly. "I must be right, and I will prove it. But I don't want to direct your thoughts, girl—heavens, no! I want to see them just as they are."

"It must be pleasant to be so sure of what you want," I said. "I wish I could be."

"You've got to be sure of what you want or you'll never get anything," he said positively. After a pause he blurted out: "Tell me about yourself, will you, Anne? Begin at the beginning. I want to know why you're where you are in the world. I should have expected to find you somewhere else."



"HE PULLED OFF HIS GLASSES AND STARED AT ME."

"If I had been somewhere else," I replied, "you would not have found me."

He pulled off his glasses and stared at me. "That's true," he said; "but go on."

"With what?"

"With your history, of course. How did you, an educated girl, come to be working in a fifth-rate boarding-house kitchen?"

"Who said I was educated? I wash my dishes clean, and I do not always murder the English language. I went to school once and learned a number of things, and I've since forgotten every one of them. Do you call that being educated?"

"Decidedly—as I understand education. So few do wash their dishes clean, you know. And most people only remember to be stupid." He had forgotten to put on the blue glasses again, and his gray eyes beamed upon me humorously. "You went to school. Very good," he went on, with a touch of impatience. "What then? Did you at once go out to service?"

"Not immediately," I replied, conscious of enjoying the situation with an absurd relish. "I tried being a lady."

"Ah!" he exclaimed with strong disapproval. "You were idle; I should n't have thought it of you."

"I was idle," I said; "I did n't earn my salt for five years."

He shook his head. "No one has a right to be idle."

"How about people who are born rich?" I asked enviously. "*They* never work, and they have everything."

He scowled. "It is impossible for any one to escape the law of give and take," he said; "and because the so-called rich try to do it, the world's in confusion."

"You hate rich people, don't you?" I asked ingenuously.

"No," he said gravely; "but I am sorry for them. As a class they are as completely cut off from all that makes life worth living as the very poor."

"Why do you say that?" I asked. "Rich people are just like everybody else, only they can do exactly as they choose, which the poor can't. It is splendid to be rich — if one gets rich out of one's self."

"What made you say 'if one gets rich out of himself'?" he asked. "That's a deep saying. I am wondering if you understand what you have said."

"I lived with a rich lady once," I said slowly. "She was n't happy. Her father had left her a huge fortune. I used to wonder about her — sometimes."

"The man was a fool to leave her the money," he said tersely. "A well-intentioned fool — but not the less fool for that. *One cannot inherit money.* Money is the outgrowth of self, like the shell of a sea creature. The woman you speak of could n't inhabit her father's cast-off shell. It did n't fit. It hurt."

"I guess that was it," I murmured indistinctly. "But what could she do?"

"A certain carpenter of Galilee once solved a similar question," he said thoughtfully. "But the young man in the case could n't see the truth of the solution. He did n't want to exchange his misfit shell for the kingdom of heaven."

I've written all this down just as I remember it. And now I've read it over, I am more aston-

ished than ever, though I don't see why I should be. Perhaps all working-men are like W. B. I never really knew one before; but I supposed they were ignorant, silent, animal-like creatures, more interested in having a full dinner-pail than in anything else. For that matter W. B. has a good appetite.

I must grow my own shell. I *must*—I *must*!

W. B. has been away for three days. He came back this morning and did n't even glance at me when I handed him his coffee. He was late again for supper. I brought in the hot dishes in silence. He pulled off his glasses (why on earth does he wear them?) and looked at me thoughtfully. "You are tired, Anne," he said kindly.

"Yes," I said, and felt of a sudden a wave of self-pity which brought an aching ball to my throat. I was actually afraid for a moment that I might cry. I pulled myself together immediately; I *loathe* that poor-little-Anne-how-you-have-been-abused feeling.

"Sit down, and talk to me while I eat my supper, Anne," he went on, in a matter-of-fact tone. "I've something to tell you."

I hesitated; after all, I thought, I am only a kitchen-maid and he is a foundry-man. There can be no actual impropriety in a foundry-man talking to a kitchen-maid.

"I'm tired, too," he went on after a pause. "This is a hard world, Anne."

"You had something to tell me," I muttered indistinctly. I really wanted to cry dreadfully. He has a beautiful voice, and it touched some string in me which vibrated intolerably.

"Yes," he said, feeling absent-mindedly in his waistcoat pocket; "it was an address. Here it is. If you will go to this house, Anne, I think you will find a way to better things. A woman lives there who will appreciate such a servant as you might become with training."

My face crimsoned angrily. "Thank you," I said icily. "I can suit myself with a place."

He set down his cup hastily. "Why are you angry with me, Anne?" he inquired in a tone of mild surprise. "Surely not because I called

you a *servant*? That is the noblest name in all the world's vocabulary."

"It was n't that," I mumbled. "It was — oh, I don't know what it was!"

It's horrible; but I did cry. Regularly boo-hooed, as I have n't since I was a baby.

William Brown jumped up and overturned his chair. "For heaven's sake, child," he cried, "what have I said — or done? You *must* tell me!"

But I bolted into the kitchen, and thence by way of the back stairs to my own room, where I've cried deliciously, and to my heart's content, for a whole hour. I feel made over, some way.

I have n't the slightest idea *why* I cried.

CHAPTER XIII

I HAD scarcely written the last words when Mrs. Buckle knocked at the door. She had an open telegram in her hand, and a firm determination to know its meaning in her eye.

"I opened it first off," she announced. "Thinks I, if it's a death, I'd ought to know it so's to break it to 'er easy. It ain't a death 'xactly, I guess; but you can't allers tell."

I snatched the bit of yellow paper and read: "Please come home. I am not well. M. Nugent."

"Land, ef I wa'n't struck all of a 'eap," observed Mrs. Buckle, seating herself comfortably on the edge of my bed. "To think of your bein' called away *now* — fer I see you're a goin'."

I was mechanically thrusting my meagre be longings into my trunk.

"An' whativer 'll I tell Willyum Brown to-morrow?" Mrs. Buckle continued, with a plaintive intonation, "I'm sure I don't know."

I called a cab and went directly home, my conscience belaboring me violently all the way. Poor, dear Aunt Nugent, how I had neglected her, and abused her kindness! "Not well," the telegram said. She was doubtless dying, while I amused myself with *foundry-men*. How could I be so unspeakably cruel and foolish? By the time I had reached Beacon Street I had worked myself into so fine a frenzy of emotion that I dashed upstairs like an affectionate whirlwind.

I met Lizzie in the corridor. "How is Aunt Nugent?" I begged in an excited whisper.

"She's as usual, thank you, Miss Anne," Lizzie answered, with a cool perfection of demeanor which made me feel crude and awkward. "Will you dress before seeing her, miss?" Her quiet, observant eyes conveyed volumes of intelligence and reproof.

"Yes, Lizzie," I said meekly.

Aunt Nugent was propped up with cushions, reading Dr. Pilkington's "Evening Reflections," when I crept into her room half an hour later. She wore a robe of lavender silk lavishly deco-

rated with lace; the pink light from her shaded lamp fell upon the soft, puffy curves of her face and her white, heavily-ringed hands. There was a faint aroma of Florida water in the room. "Oh, Anne," she exclaimed, looking at me queerly, "it is you."

"Yes, aunt," I said humbly; "I've come back."

She moved uneasily among her pillows, all the time staring at me in that strange, half-frightened way.

"You — you are looking well," she said at length.

I shrugged impatiently. "I'm always well," I said. "But you — The telegram said you were not well. Have you been ill?"

At this Aunt Nugent began to sob weakly. "Oh, Anne," she sniffed, "I wonder I am not laid away — I do, indeed, with what heart-rending anxiety and cook's insisting on too much salt in my chicken broth. You know I never *could* bear much salt; it's so irritating to the mucous membranes. But Mary *will* season to suit her own taste — and when Mrs. Van Deuser called on

Thursday morning, and Lizzie, too, and told me *everything*. Oh, my dear, dear child, what *could* I do?"

"Mrs. Van Deuser!" I exclaimed. "What could she possibly tell you? And Lizzie—I must ask you to explain yourself, aunt!"

"How can I?" moaned Aunt Nugent. "But I must nerve myself and have it over with." Her hands trembled so excessively that I was really alarmed, and approached with the camphor bottle. "She saw you at *that concert*," went on Aunt Nugent, waving the bottle aside. "They *both* saw you, and told me."

"Well?" I said stupidly.

"*With a man*—a coarse, common-looking working-man; Mrs. Van Deuser said she noticed him particularly. She is a patroness, you know, of the lecture course for working people."

"He is not common-looking," I said hastily, "nor coarse, and I don't care what Mrs. Van Deuser says. She is a meddlesome old cat."

"Then it is true," wailed Aunt Nugent, wringing her hands. "And all the while I thought you were visiting in the most select circles in

New York. Oh, Anne, Anne, I did so hope it was all a mistake — though Lizzie was sure it was you. She was there with her young man — a very respectable person in the plumbing line, and sat directly behind you. She said she had done your back hair too many times to be mistaken in it.”

I drew a deep breath. “Aunt Nugent,” I said, “I would like you to remember that I am my own mistress, to begin with. And to end with, I beg to remind you that I know what is proper quite as well as you do. I will tell you all about what I have been doing to-morrow. But I’ll tell you now that it’s nothing I’m ashamed of, and there’s nothing wrong about it, though you may think so.”

“I hope so, I’m sure. Oh, my dear, my dear!” mumbled Aunt Nugent, with another of her strange glances.

Just what this meant, I discovered this morning when my three lawyers called upon me in state. They were excessively embarrassed, but determined, and I made a clean breast of the whole affair, when I saw I must.

"I regret all this seeming impertinence of ours, as you doubtless regard it, my dear Miss Smith," said Mr. Taunton, the oldest and stateliest of the three, after I had done. "But when Mrs. Van Deuser—a friend of your aunt's, I believe, and a mutual acquaintance—came to me and told me quite fully, on your aunt's behalf, just what she had seen, we felt bound to make some inquiries into the matter, you know. Mrs. Nugent actually suspected that you might be—well—to—ah—put it briefly—she really feared that you might have become *non compos mentis*. Very absurd it all seems in view of your really laudable ambition to reach the working classes. But if you will permit me to say so, my dear young lady, I should recommend another sort of investigation of sociological problems. It's a favorite study of my own, by the way, and I can put you on to the track of all the authorities."

They tried to be very jocose and complimentary, and bowed themselves out with all sorts of apologies.

After they went I shut myself up in my room

and *simply raged*—till I grew frightened at myself. Then I went out and walked miles. When I came back, I went straight to Aunt Nugent's room. "Aunt Nugent," I said, "I want to tell you that I'm sorry I frightened you so. To tell you the truth, I did n't think anything about you. I mean to think about you more after this, and take better care of you." Then I kissed her—for the first time in years—and let her cry over me as long as I could bear it.

I still had Lizzie to reckon with. "Lizzie," I said abruptly, when she was doing my hair at bedtime, "what did you think when you saw me at the Mechanics' Concert?"

"I was that surprised, miss, to think as 'ow you were in town, an' we did n't know it. An' that's ivery word I said to Mrs. Nugent, miss; she'll have told you." I felt the girl's hand tremble against my hair.

"I wanted to see how it felt to be a servant, Lizzie. I wanted to find out just what it was like to be poor."

"It ain't all bad, miss," half whispered the girl; "I wanted to tell you as 'ow I've been

thinkin' of bein' married come Christmas — though I can't bear to leave you, miss."

"Yes, you can, Lizzie," I said, with a smile and a sigh. Somehow I understand just how the girl feels, and I'm glad I do.

CHAPTER XIV

THE shell does n't fit. It hurts. But what am I going to do about it? Four days of the old life, and I am running on my wheel with all the desperate energy of a caged squirrel. *I want something.* And I don't know what it is. The foundry-man said, "You must be sure of what you want, or you'll never get anything." I've always been an aching void of want, and I never knew what I wanted. I don't now.

To-day I read over the story of Christ and the rich young man. He said, "Go sell what thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." The foundry-man thinks that is the solution, I am sure. I wish I had asked him if he thought one really ought to do it. I never heard of any one who did. I have given lots of money away. I am giving so much now that Aunt Nugent says we shall be ruined. I'm not one bit happier, though. I

wonder what would happen if I should really sell everything and give the money to the poor. I would "find treasure in heaven," I suppose. But somehow or other I don't want that—yet. And—who are the poor?

Mrs. Van Deuser came to see me this morning. "Do you know, my dear, I really admire you more than I can say for what you have done," she said impressively. "But I fear the working classes are hardly able to appreciate the magnitude of such a sacrifice as you have made."

"I did it for fun," I said bluntly.

"Noble, noble girl," murmured Mrs. Van Deuser. "Do you know, my child, that people are just beginning to find out how wonderfully clever and interesting you are? *So different* from the ordinary girl. You will see!" She said this with a sort of massive archness.

I have had an astonishing number of invitations this week, and I have made up my mind to accept every one of them, if for nothing more than to show people that I am not crazy.

I am a society success at last! It began in the queerest way. My first function was a dinner-dance, and it occurred to me how funny it would be if, instead of the people who were there, I should see the "folks at Buckleses." Then I perceived that there were, in fact, a number of strong resemblances.

That tall, showy Miss Braisted, who's been making such a sensation this winter, is enough like Stella Kimbark to be a near relation. Her supercilious mien, her black, soulless eyes, her metallic laugh, and even the clashing, glittering adornments of her person were all perfectly recognizable. Next to her sat Joey Larkins, disguised as a Harvard athlete. It required no stretch of the imagination to see a likeness to good Mrs. Buckle in our elegant hostess, with her shrewd, anxious eyes and her humorously ill-natured speeches.

Just for the fun of it, I began to talk to the person next me—a dull, washed-out-looking man, who strongly resembles a certain boiler-maker I had seen at Buckle's—just as if he was the boiler-maker, and not a dilettante scientist

with too much money to amount to anything. He was charmed. So was the attenuated little milliner's apprentice who sat opposite, and so, after a little, was the butcher's assistant who sat next the milliner's apprentice. I found the experiment really amusing. And when in the ball-room after dinner I was introduced to Mrs. Lehn's veritable double, and danced twice with a very lively and entertaining steam-fitter, I was quite filled with the joys of my discovery.

I looked carefully for the foundry-man, but I did n't see him.

This sort of thing has gone on for several weeks. I make new finds every day, and the crowning joke of it all is that I'm now "a social favorite"!

Last week the boiler-maker actually proposed, and the butcher's assistant is openly infatuated. The latter gentleman poses as a banker, and bears an illuminated old Boston name, but for all that he is precisely like the butcher's assistant who boarded at Buckle's, in every discoverable particular except his clothes and his accent.

The actual solidarity of the human race never really dawned on my horizon before. If clothes and accent are the only apparent effects of modern education, real differences of character must be the result of ages of living—somewhere. All this time I have n't seen anybody who resembles the foundry-man in the least particular.

I saw him to-day. I was in the carriage, and Winston somehow got into a snarl of carts and busses on Tremont Street. He finally drew up near the curb to wait a bit. I leaned forward idly and saw—W. B. He was helping a poor woman with a bundle to cross the street. In an instant the crowd had swallowed him. He did n't see me.

The butcher's assistant was waiting in the reception room when I returned. "I really could n't go away without seeing you, Miss Smith," he began in his unpleasant, toneless voice. I saw what was coming, and scowled in a way which ought to have intimidated him. But he went on and asked me to marry him in precisely the terms one would expect from such a man.

After I had refused him point-blank and in a variety of other ways, he smiled and advised me not to decide the matter hastily. I saw that he was considering the correlative facts that I am twenty-seven years old and that he is the "great catch" of many seasons. His little eyes glistened pleasantly. "I fancy I have been too sudden — too — er — precipitate, you know," he murmured; "I will wait a month for my final answer."

"My answer will be precisely the same at the end of one month or twenty," I said. He only pressed my hand, stared beadily, and took his leave.

It was a horrid day, cold, drizzling, and altogether nasty. It reminded me absurdly enough of the day I talked with the foundry-man in the church porch. And presently without any real idea of my destination I found myself in a street-car. After that I walked a long way through dirty, sloppy streets, and then—I waked up to the fact that all this time I had been gravitating toward Mrs. Buckle's as unerringly as a bird flies south.

There was the four-story, red-brick house, with its ancient, fly-blown legend "Boarding," and its greenery, yallery blinds tightly drawn to keep a hypothetical sunbeam from an equally hypothetical carpet. The area door opened and a slatternly girl, enveloped in an almost visible halo of yellow soap and frying fat, emerged. She stared at me open-mouthed for a full minute; then I heard a familiar voice from within: "Whatever's got a holt of you now, 'Liza? You ain't got no more sprawl 'an a scaling sarpint, an' that's the gospel truth. Come in 'ere this minnut an' do them turnits."

I walked quickly away, turning the nearest corner in my haste to escape from the place. How could I have stayed there even one day? I felt hot and ashamed all over, and my ears tingled as if with a blow. I bent my head against the wind and rain, and was hurrying blindly forward when the most astonishing thing happened. I walked directly and with some violence into a man who was approaching in the same blind fashion from the opposite direction. I looked up with a mumbled apology.

"Oh, it's you?" I said foolishly. It was the foundry-man.

"Anne!" he cried in his deep voice. "Why are you here?"

I knew without a shadow of doubt why I was there, and I never thought of lying. "I wanted to see you," I answered, in the tone of a small and particularly stupid child.

"Anne!" he murmured again, with one of his illuminating smiles. "Come, we must n't stand here in the rain, where shall we go?"

"Calvary Church is right around the corner; we can stand in the porch as we did before," I said unblushingly. I could n't think of anything but that I had found him.

"Where have you been, child?" he asked. "Are you coming back to Mrs. Buckle's?" His eyes roved anxiously over me. "But no. You must n't go there again; it is not a fit place for you." After a pause he added thoughtfully: "I am going away soon, so I am glad to have this little good-by talk. Did you keep the address I gave you, Anne?"

"I have a place, thank you," I murmured.

Then I added hastily: "I only wanted to ask you about that rich young man. Do you think he ought to have sold *all* his property?"

"The rich young man?" he replied, frowning and eying me suspiciously. "What rich young man?"

"The one in the Bible," I explained. "Don't you think Christ meant that he should give away the interest on his money, and — and live simply — I mean give up living like a very rich man? I ought to tell you I've gone back to live with the rich woman I told you of, and — and she's very much interested in that chapter. Sometimes I read it to her nights. She does give away a great deal of money, and I don't think she means to be selfish."

His face had cleared and brightened wonderfully as I went on with my halting and deceitful explanation. I felt thoroughly ashamed as his attentive eyes rested on my face. "Do you know, Anne," he said warmly, "I am wonderfully pleased to think you remembered our little talk, and that you are trying to help on the great cause in the world. Your reward will come

to you, my child, never fear. But about this lady you speak of—I wonder if it would be possible for me to see her. Do you think it would, Anne? Is she a prim, proud, haughty sort of person who would— But no—I see that it would be impossible. And after all it is not my work.”

He stopped short, and I took advantage of the silence to ask a question. “What is the great cause?” I demanded. “If I am to help it on, as you say, I must at least know what it is.”

“The great cause,” he answered directly, “is the bringing to pass in the world of universal brotherhood. Not the artificial, tied-on, make-believe sort that our preachers prate about year in and year out, but the real brotherhood that Christ preached. God the actual Father of all human beings, Christ the elder brother.”

“That’s just what our rector says almost every Sunday,” I murmured resignedly. “It does n’t seem to mean very much.”

“That’s just the trouble, Anne!” he said, with strong indignation. “It does n’t mean anything.

The very men who preach this gospel of brotherhood are sleek and well fed in their broadcloth and silk. They jostle one another in their scramble for big-salaried churches. They soothe and coddle the rich members of their congregations. They have turned the fiery sayings of the Master into meaningless platitudes, which they chant monotonously into the drowsy ear of humanity. Tell your rich woman that Christ meant *just what he said*. Tell her to obey, if she dares, and enter into the kingdom."

"What would she find there?" I asked. "Remember she is a woman and alone in the world. If she becomes poor, what could she do?"

"God is her Father, and she need fear nothing," he answered. "The kingdom means abundance, Anne. Not the abundance of the muck-rake and the moth-eaten, rust-corrupted hoard, but the boundless opulence of the Father's house. If the world could only see that *once*! Why, Anne, when Christ wanted money to pay tribute with, he got it from a fish's mouth. When he wanted bread to feed

the multitudes, he created it out of viewless air. These are not idle tales, child. They are facts, and point the way to the most tremendous discoveries. *Christ was not poor.* He was conscious of boundless resources right at hand. No child of God need fear present poverty, nor hoard for a rainy day, nor want—*anything*. Your rich woman cannot find out these things about the Father till she lets go her foolish money. She *must* let it go, Anne, and you must make her do it. You can. And I honestly believe that is your mission in life. You would not have come to me else.” His eyes glowed. His whole face was transfigured.

“Oh, *why* are you a foundry-man?” I cried.

“Why was Christ a carpenter?” he answered.

I was silent for a long minute, and the monotonous drip and gurgle of the water-pipes filled the air with a sad murmur of sound. “You are going away,” I whispered miserably. “I shall never see you again.”

“I don’t know, Anne,” he said quietly. “No one can say as to that. It depends altogether on what we are meant to be to each other.

Sometimes I have thought—" he stopped short, and looked at me fixedly.

I met his eyes unwaveringly. And so we looked at one another for a moment—or an eternity. And in that space I resolved to give up my money.

"I think we shall meet again, Anne," he said softly. "And now, good-by."

He stooped and kissed me on my forehead. My eyes were blinded with a sudden rush of tears. When I could see once more he was gone, and the rain was filling the silence with a desolate murmur of sound. Good-by—good-by!

CHAPTER XV

I AM torn with a thousand doubts and anxieties about my future. I must give up my money, but I have n't the slightest idea how to go at it. Everything is absolutely mine, to be sure, and has been since I was twenty-one. I suppose there are any number of charitable boards, and missionary enterprises and "causes," which would make one comfortable gulp of a fortune like mine; but I don't want to be like the small boy I saw in Florida last winter who threw his piece of cake to a pet alligator. He came running to his mother in great distress of mind. "He did n't even chew it, mother," he complained; "he just opened his mouth once, and it was gone."

If one is to give up one's cake, it would be a satisfaction to see it chewed.

Then there is Aunt Nugent. I offered to read out of the Bible to her on Sunday after-

noon. She was delighted. "Do, dear child," she purred, and settled herself in her most cushiony chair, and closed her eyes with a beatific smile.

I read the nineteenth chapter of Matthew.

"Beautiful!" murmured Aunt Nugent, sleepily.

"But what do you think of it?" I urged, rather excitedly. "I am a rich woman, aunt, and you see what I must do if I really want to be saved."

She opened her eyes wide at this. "Oh, my dear, *dear* child, how I have *prayed* for this hour," she gurgled softly; "and to think that you have really begun to think seriously on the subject of religion. I'm sure I never expected such a thing."

"I'm not talking about the subject of religion," I said crossly, "I'm talking about my money. Don't you see I must give it all up? That's what he said, and he meant it, too."

"*Who* said such an absurd thing, Anne?" demanded Aunt Nugent. "Pray hand me my camphor bottle, child. I really cannot bear any more excitement."

I fetched the camphor from the dressing-table. "It says so in the chapter I read, aunt. Christ said so; did n't you hear?"

"*Oh!*" sighed Aunt Nugent, with an air of strong relief. "What a fright you did give me! I thought perhaps you 'd fallen in with some dangerous reformer. Do you know, Anne, I never could quite get over your going to that concert with a *common workman*. How did you ever come to do it?"

"Never mind the workman, aunt," I said; "I'm quite in earnest. I'm going to give up my money just as soon as I can make up my mind what to do with it."

Aunt Nugent sat up straight. "You 'll do nothing of the kind, Anne," she said with a determination I never dreamed she possessed. "People will say you are crazy with some reason, if you don't stop talking such unheard-of nonsense."

I saw there was no use of wasting words, so I put down the Bible and went out to walk. He ought not to have gone away. He ought to have stayed and told me what to do.

There is a lot said about the difficulties of getting rich, but I never heard any one mention the difficulties connected with getting poor. I am simply worn out with them. I was an idiot to mention my plans to Aunt Nugent. She has made my life a burden ever since with a mixture of tracts, expostulations, tears, and visitors. Dr. Gallatin has called to see me twice. The first time he affected the urbane and kindly ecclesiastical shepherd engaged in hooking back into the way of truth an eccentric and straying sheep—I can hardly be termed a lamb, though Aunt Nugent called me one yesterday in a burst of fervid emotion.

“May I ask, my dear Miss Smith, what led you into this very unusual way of thinking?” he demanded smilingly.

“It’s in the Bible,” I replied shortly.

“There are many statements of approximate truth in Holy Writ, dear Miss Anne, which do not apply personally to you or to me,” he said authoritatively. “Our blessed Saviour never intended to lay down rigid rules for the guidance of his church. It is the Spirit which illumines

these difficult sayings, my dear young lady, and makes them easy of comprehension."

"What kind of a spirit do you mean, Dr. Galatin?" I inquired.

He looked shocked. "Surely you must have understood that I referred to the third person in the Holy Trinity, Miss Smith," he said severely. "That Spirit is ever with the believer, instructing and guiding him into safe paths. You believe this statement, do you not?"

"If I did believe it, it would not be necessary for me to discuss the subject of giving away my money with you, or any one," I replied smartly.

"Do you feel that it is the third person in the Trinity which directs you to this course?" he asked pointedly; "or is it some other influence?"

He had me there. I felt my face and ears slowly taking fire. "You have no right to ask such a question," I murmured wrathfully.

"From your spiritual director I fancy the question would be considered an eminently proper one," he replied, with a rebuking smile. "It only remains for me to advise you to spend much time in prayerful consideration of your duty be-

tween now and the Sabbath, at which time I shall preach on the duties of the rich, and their relation to the lower classes of society. In the meantime I must beg of you to consider your devoted and sorrowing relative, who is one of the ripest and most devotional members of my parish."

Then he asked for Aunt Nugent, and I came upstairs to my room. Sometimes I just hate religion!

Ideas travel. How else does every creature within five hundred miles, with a gaping void in his or her individual purse, know all of a sudden that I am willing to empty mine? I feel like a dying camel in a desert, the air overhead darkening with ominous wings.

I've had two hundred begging letters in the last three weeks, and the door is besieged from morning till night by persons who "represent" every conceivable scheme for reforming and relieving wretched humanity.

Aunt Nugent says it is horrible — disgraceful. And for once I am inclined to agree with her. I don't mind the mud on the reformers' boots,

nor the odor of boiled cabbage and fried cakes which seems to curiously enfold the reformers like an aura; but I am afraid of their hungry eyes; and their whining voices fill me with disgust and loathing. I must have time to think—to consider. I will not give father's fortune to such people. It can't be right.

I had a talk with Mr. Taunton to-day. He was father's best friend, and I respect him as one of the sanest men I know. "Miss Anne," he said, "do you know you're trying to match yourself, single-handed, against one of the greatest questions of the ages? Christ cut the knot fairly and squarely, and the church weakly attempted to follow his teachings for a time. You know the story of the apostolic age, with its 'all things in common,' and its 'daily distribution to the necessities of the saints,' and all that. It did n't work. They carried out one dead Ananias and Sapphira to be sure, but there were too many left to tell their lies more circumspectly. The church is full of them now. And it's a pretty big proposition for one lone woman to try and turn the world-current back. Now I call myself

a Christian; and I believe I should be considered a fair sample of the church's product of to-day; but I know that I'm no more of a *Christ* than the thief in his cell. We're called to be *Christs*, Anne, and we've got to get there in some age or other, in some world or other, but the time hasn't come for most of us. I simply cannot bring myself to obey the Sermon on the Mount. I almost laugh aloud when I hear it intoned at St. Andrew's. Nobody, including the rector and the curate, ever thinks of such a thing as obeying it."

"I know one man who does," I thought aloud.

He looked at me keenly. "Don't be too sure of that," he said quietly. "Do you want to tell me who he is?"

"No," I answered drearily; "it does not matter to you—nor to me; I shall never see him again."

I am so tired of it all that when Aunt Nugent, after a long and tearful preamble, begged me to go to Baden with her for the winter, I consented. I know W. B. is right; but I can't fight the battle alone—yet.

CHAPTER XVI

YESTERDAY I sat for a long time in front of my fire with this book in my hands. I meant to burn it; but I could not. It is all I have left. If we are not to meet again, I can at least see him sometimes as he first appeared to me. I know now why I stayed on and on at Mrs. Buckle's. I know why I cried so deliciously the night Aunt Nugent's telegram called me home. I know why I was willing to give up my money. There is no use in hiding it even from myself. I love him.

I know now for all time that beauty and money and education do not weigh a feather's weight in the balance of reality.

Yes, I love him. That he is poor, unknown, and lost to me in the world-ruck matters nothing. I am glad — glad — in the deepest depths of me.

To love — *to really love* — is the most glorious thing in this world or any world. I think now

that I must always have loved him. I have been trying to remember the shadowy past of me—for I have a past, not measured by my poor little twenty-seven years.

I was trying to remember something of it last night when I fell asleep. And in my dreams I saw him. He stood in the midst of a great room filled with people. He was speaking, and his eyes and face shone with glorious thought. I struggled through the crowd. "Oh, why are you a foundry-man?" I cried.

"Anne!" he said, and I stretched out my arms toward him. Then the room and the people faded away, and we were standing together under the stone porch at St. Andrew's. It was raining, and the water-pipes gurgled monotonously.

"Anne!" he repeated, and touched his lips to my forehead. "Don't you remember? Don't you understand?" Then I saw many strange, dim pictures of the past, and always we two were together. And beneath and above all I was aware of some high, mysterious purpose, unfolding into an unimaginable splendor of destiny. I cried aloud in an ecstasy of joy—and awoke.

I have forgotten the pictures, and the gray curtain of common daylight has veiled the glories of the future. But I am strangely comforted, none the less. All is not over between us.

Aunt Nugent wishes to spend a month in England. So we travelled by slow and comfortable stages to Stratford, where we are installed in the best rooms of a picturesque little inn. Aunt Nugent has interviewed the *chef* personally on the subject of broths and other vital necessities; but she nevertheless expresses herself as being at serious odds with her surroundings.

"They really do my chops extraordinarily well, Anne," she observed plaintively; "but as for salads and sweets, as they call them, I really fear I shall have to deny myself altogether till we find some other hotel. I cannot assimilate their sodden tarts and lumpy puddings. I have such a delicate digestion, my love. I sometimes wonder how it would seem to feel as you do. I dare say you are never obliged to think of

your food at all. Pray, tell me, my love, did you sleep well after that gooseberry pâté with clotted cream? I sent Jane to your room with a soda-mint tablet, but she said she thought you must be asleep. You did n't answer."

"I don't remember what I ate for dinner," I replied, "but I certainly slept well."

Aunt Nugent shook her head with a windy sigh. "Do you know, my dear, such a digestion as that seems almost unladylike to me. I cannot help feeling that the young women of this generation are sadly lacking in those qualities of mind and heart that should preëminently distinguish them."

"I thought we were talking about stomachs," I said.

"Oh, my child, what a way to put it!" expostulated Aunt Nugent. "But you cannot look at life from my point of view. Indeed, you have never done so."

She smoothed out the folds of her gown with an air of chastened pride in her own superior discrimination, and continued, "Could you once bring yourself to open your mind to me, my child,

— for I feel that I do not know *all* by any means,
— I am sure that I could advise you for your
lasting good.”

“Let ’s go to London, aunt,” I said suddenly.
“They have very decent salads and sweets
there.”

At Birmingham, where the train stopped for fifteen minutes, I got out to walk a bit on the platform. There is an open square near the station, and I saw a great crowd of men surging back and forth in a seemingly aimless fashion. “What ’s hup?” inquired the guard of a navvy, who stood at the curb, staring stolidly in the direction of the crowd.

“Some Hamerican chap or other a-chaffin’ of the boys,” replied the fellow. “I ’eard ’im las’ night in Guild ’all. ’E ’s a rummy chap, ’e is.”

The crowd opened suddenly, and I saw the man at its core. It was the foundry-man. In some mysterious fashion I had been aware of it all the while. I ran back into the train. “Aunt Nugent,” I said breathlessly, “we must stop here.” I was pulling down bags and umbrellas with reckless haste, when two determined hands fastened on to my jacket. The door slammed violently, and I

sank into my seat, conscious that the train was moving in the noiseless, gliding fashion peculiar to English railways. Aunt Nugent was applying herself to her smelling-salts, with closed eyes. "Did you — dare to hold me back?" I fumed.

"Indeed, I did, Anne; what were you thinking of, my love, with Jane in the rear compartment, too? And why, pray, should we get off at Birmingham? There is nothing there we want to see."

I turned and strained my eyes after the vanishing station. "I saw something I wanted," I said mechanically. "I wanted to stop; I thought —"

"Something you wanted!" repeated Aunt Nugent, with a show of mild indignation. "What could you possibly want in Birmingham that we cannot find in London? How fortunate for you, dear child, that a wise Providence placed you in my care!"

"Providence was far too inconsiderate of you, aunt," I said gloomily.

"Oh, I can bear it, my love," sighed Aunt Nugent, patting my hand in her own peculiarly irritating way.

I was so wretched I let her do it, and after a while she kissed me. What idiot invented kissing, I wonder?

I made up my mind over night what I should do. I know it is n't what any other girl in my place would do, but I don't care. There is n't any other girl in my place, for that matter.

I left a note for Aunt Nugent, telling her that I had been called away on important business and should not be at home till evening. I enclosed fifty pounds, and begged her to spend the day in the shops.

The square at Birmingham was empty when I stepped out on the platform. Curiously enough, the identical navvy lounged near the curb, staring stolidly into space. I hesitated for an instant, then spoke to him. "Can you tell me," I asked, "where I can find the man who was talking to the people yesterday in that square?"

His slow eyes roved inquiringly over my person. "Was you a-meanin' the Hamerican chap, leddy?" he inquired at last. "An' w'at might a leddy like you want wi' th' likes of 'im?"

"Never mind what I want," I said. "I am an

American," I added hastily. "I knew Mr. Brown on the other side. I want to find him."

The navvy leered knowingly. "She wants to find 'im — eh?" he said softly. "Now ain't that a rummy go. Th' Hamerican ledly wants to find th' Hamerican gent — she does. W'y not tak' up wi' an honest Henglishman, miss, bein' as yer on this side th' water."

I walked smartly away, my face burning, called a cabman and jumped into the vehicle. "Where to, ledly?" demanded the driver. I saw the navvy slowly approaching. "To the park," I said hastily. The door slammed, and the cab rolled away. After a block or two I signalled the man to stop. "I will get out here," I explained. "I prefer to walk."

I reached for my purse to pay the man his fare. It was gone. I searched wildly in the pockets of my jacket, then realized in one awful minute that I was alone and penniless in a strange city.

The cabman instantly saw my predicament. "'Urry up th' fare, mum," he repeated with an insolent gesture. "Cawn't wait 'ere all day."

"I 've lost my purse," I said wildly. "It 's been stolen from me."

"Ah 've 'eard the likes 'afore from leddys o' your sort," said the cabman, laying his hand upon my arm. "Pay hup now, or ah 'll gi'e you in charge."

I turned upon him suddenly. "Let go my arm, sir," I said, "or I shall call the nearest policeman. I have lost my purse, but I can pay you." I pulled off my glove and snatched a jewelled button from my cuff. "Take that," I said breathlessly. "It 's worth your fare a dozen times."

The fellow turned it over in his grimy fingers, then thrust it back into my hand. "Ah doan want th' likes o' it," he growled sullenly. "Mayhap it 's paste — Ah can't tell 'un. Gi'e us th' sparkler off yer finger, miss, an' ah 'll call it right."

"You 'll call what right, fellow?" demanded a crisp American voice at my elbow. "I 've been watching this affair from the window for some minutes, and I made up my mind that something — Good heavens — Anne! What are you doing here?"

My confused and astonished eyes rested upon a tall, broad-shouldered young man, with a clean-cut, straight-featured face. His honest eyes met mine with a humorous twinkle. "Have you forgotten us already, Anne?" he asked. "Mrs. Ely will never forget you, I can assure you. Here, I'll pay this chap, and then you must come in and explain yourself. Mrs. Ely is right over yonder; she'll be delighted to see you again."

I decided that I would explain everything but the purpose of my visit to Birmingham in the course of our short progress to the hotel where the Elys were stopping. Mrs. Ely was prettier than ever. She kissed me enthusiastically before she knew that I was anything more than a "twelve-dollar-rahr" housemaid out of a place.

"Oh, Anne," she cried, her brown eyes sparkling with tears, "I've talked it over so many times with Dick, and we both know we owe a great deal of our happiness to you. Don't you remember how you advised me to invite daddy to visit us? And after he came—you remember the night he came, Anne?"

What a surprise that was for Dick—I mean Mr. Ely. But we've been *so* happy ever since. Daddy just *loves* Dick now; he's such a splendid business man—Dick is, I mean. And we're going home in a few weeks now, and I'm so glad to see you, dear Anne."

It was my turn now. I explained my past conduct as well and as simply as I was able. It struck Mrs. Ely as being deliciously funny. "To think of your being a rich woman all that time," she trilled, "and—and making *hash*! Think of that, Dick! It was such good hash, Anne. I may call you Anne, may n't I, dear? And you taught me how to darn, too. I've always darned daddy's and Dick's socks since then. I love to do it."

When Mr. Hilton came in shortly after, the whole story had to be rehearsed for his benefit. He drew his white brows together. "Are you John Smith's daughter?" he asked abruptly.

"Yes," I said; "but there are so many John Smiths."

"There was just one John Smith for me," he said slowly. Then he made it clear to me

that he was one of father's best and dearest friends. I am glad I have found them all again. It was n't what I came to Birmingham for, but I am glad I did n't find the foundry-man. I shan't try to find him again. He will find me.

Mr. Hilton and the Elys journeyed up to London with me next day. While the men were stretching their legs at a side station, Mrs. Ely bent toward me with a pensive question in her sweet brown eyes. "Anne," she began solemnly, "why don't you marry? I've been thinking and thinking about you ever since yesterday. And do you know, I believe you need a husband. He would have to be a fine, strong, splendid man — but oh, Anne, you 'd be so much happier."

"Gladys," I answered (I've promised to call her that), "you are entirely right. And when I find that fine, strong, splendid man, I mean to marry him. And no one shall keep me from it."

CHAPTER XVII

WHEN at sea, it is Aunt Nugent's custom to remain in her berth from the time the ship leaves one port till it reaches another. She prepares for the voyage by assuming a singularly constructed garment of purple and white checked flannel and a pair of high laced boots. She complains of the latter articles bitterly; but when I urge her to lay them off, she invariably refuses.

"One should always be prepared for the worst, Anne," she says plaintively. "I hope to be found ready and waiting when my time comes."

"But why laced boots, Aunt Nugent?" I inquire mildly. "One would drown perfectly well in knit slippers, and you know they are much more comfortable."

"I hope I understand my duty, Anne," is her invariable reply. "I never lose consciousness for one moment, child, of the depths of ocean which yawn beneath our frail bark. If it

were not for my precious books of devotion, I could never support the voyage."

I have left her to the care of Jane, who, fortunately, is never ill. Jane also wears tightly laced boots out of respect to Aunt Nugent. She says it makes her feel "a sight more safer" to have them on.

No one on board has spoken to me yet but the dyspeptic-looking woman who sits next me at table. This individual generously offered me two sheets of blue-lined note-paper to-day, which she declared was a perfect preventive of seasickness if applied directly over the pit of the stomach. "The lines," added my kind mentor, earnestly, "should run up and down, perpendicular to the floor of the ocean, you understand."

I declined with thanks on the ground that I never suffer with seasickness. The sea begins to make itself felt to-night, and I noticed that the dyspeptic lady was not visible. The chief difficulty with her infallible remedy, I fancy, is in keeping the lines perpendicular to the floor of ocean.

I am wondering what I shall do when I get home. What is *home*, anyway? Have I ever had one, I wonder?

How tawdry and frail and foolish seem gildings and plushes and mirrors, how feeble and ineffectual the pallid electric lights when night and storm stare in at one's port-holes. I went to my stateroom last night lost to all other consciousness save that of the sea pursuing us unrelentingly from battling crest to battling crest. I climbed into the gloomy recesses of my berth and lay long awake, aware of every desperate plunge of the ship, of every quivering, irresolute pause in the yawning hollow of the surges, of every determined struggle to the apex of the next wave, till at last I was soothed in spite of myself by the long, swinging rhythm of my giant cradle, and slept.

Jane stood by my berth when I awoke in the gray daylight. She was herself gray and dishevelled. "Ain't it that awful, Miss Anne?" she began dolefully. "Do you suppose we'll ever see land again? And is there anything I can do to help you, miss?"

"How is Aunt Nugent?" I inquired.

"It's not a wink of sleep I've took along of her, Miss Anne," sniffed Jane, disconsolately. "I changed her shoes for her three times 'twixt midnight an' mornin', an' she said at six as how she was ready to be offered a willin' sacrifice. But she's a-dozin' off comfortable now."

I advised Jane to do likewise, then struggled into my clothes and up to the deck.

At the top of the companionway I came upon a group of women passengers, obviously furnished like myself with digestions of an unladylike soundness. They were gathered about one of the deck stewards, a small, oily person, with pale, protruding eyes.

"A steerage passenger, you say?" one of the women was remarking caustically. "Very well, and what was a steerage passenger doing to get hurt like that?"

"I don't rightly know, ma'am; but they say it was this way. 'E stepped out to ketch a holt of one of the kids, — there's an awful lot of 'em, ma'am, below, — 'un 'ad got out some how or t'other and was like to get washed over. But

this 'ere chap, 'e ups an' grabs the kid, an' 'ands 'im to his mother safe and sound. Then a big wave ketches 'im and carries 'im clean acrost decks, an' smashes 'im hup against the rail—like a hegg, ma'am; 'e 's in the ship's 'orspital, ma'am, an' 'e'll 'ardly last the day out, they say."

"What is the poor fellow's name?" inquired another.

"Well, ma'am, I hasked the very same question myself, an' I was struck all of a 'eap, as you may say, ma'am, to find it was same as my hown. I 'm thinkin' I 'll 'ave to cable back to t'other side d'rectly we make port, or my wife 'll be puttin' on th' black for me. But 'ow a poor chap like me with six little 'uns is goin' to spare the money—oh, thank you very kindly, ma'am, an' you, ma'am."

He turned to me with a sidelong bow. "What is your name?" I demanded.

"Willyum Brown, ma'am," replied the steward.

There are probably as many William Browns in the world as there are Anne Smiths, but I never doubted for an instant that it was my William Brown who lay crushed and dying in the ship's hospital.

I followed the steward as he sidled away with a deprecating smile. "You must take me to the ship's hospital," I whispered; "I must see that man."

"Thank you kindly, ma'am," murmured the man, mechanically; "but you'll 'ave to ask the doctor, ma'am."

I found the doctor. I don't remember how — nor where — nor what arguments I used to overcome his strenuous objections. But after what seemed hours of delay, I was standing beside the narrow bed in the ship's hospital, and looking down on the swathed and motionless figure of the man I loved. His eyes were closed, and for the first time — or the millionth — I noticed the extreme beauty of his forehead beneath the damp masses of heavy reddish hair.

"We are unable to determine the exact extent of the man's injuries," said the cold, professional voice of the reluctant surgeon. "But it must be evident to you, madam, that you can be of no service whatever in the case. The probabilities are that he will never arouse from this state of coma."

I turned upon that surgeon suddenly, some-

thing big and powerful and compelling rising within me like a tide. "He *will* arouse from it," I said quietly. "He *will* recover. Do you hear me? He is going to live."

I bent over the quiet figure. "You will not die," I said softly, and the tides of that strange power seemed to stream out from my very fingertips. "You will *live — live — live!*"

If I spoke other words, I know not. I seemed caught up into a rapture of life — life eternal, unchanging, ever present! Whether in a moment or an æon — he opened his eyes and looked at me.

"You?" he breathed faintly, and smiled. "Do not leave me," he said again.

Two days later I stole quietly into Aunt Nugent's stateroom. "Aunt," I said, "the sea is very quiet to-day. Do you think you could get up and dress long enough to come to my wedding?"

"To your — *what?*" almost screamed my only surviving female relation.

"To my wedding, aunt," I repeated calmly. "I

am to be married to William Brown in the ship's hospital at ten o'clock. It is now nine. Will you come?"

Of course copious and annotated explanations were in order, and they were forthcoming. Aunt Nugent only wept piteously. "I would n't mind your being married, Anne," she sniffed; "you know I have never wanted you to be an old maid. But to a steerage passenger, oh, Anne — Anne — Anne! What would your poor, dear father say?"

"He would be glad — he is glad," I replied stoutly, "because I am going to marry the man I love. Won't you come, aunt?"

The old primitive longing for a woman to stand by one in that hour of hours came over me. "Please come, aunt," I repeated gently.

Aunt Nugent put one tightly booted foot out of her berth. Then she dropped her best blue-and-gold copy of Dr. Pilkington into a cup of cold tea. "Call Jane," she said firmly. "I shall certainly come if you want me to, my child."

Dear Aunt Nugent, I have never loved her half enough. But I shall love her dearly after

this. I shall love everybody. Oh, it was only love that I wanted. It is love that everybody wants. Not money — not power — not *things* — but *love*. And the universe is filled with it. There is enough for all.

We have been married three days. To-morrow we reach port. My husband is almost well. "His injuries proved to be not so serious as I feared," says the surgeon, complacently.

But I know better — *we* know better. He was drifting swiftly out upon that serene and limitless sea which all of us know from age-long experience. But he heard me call and came back for a while.

This morning while we sat together quietly in a sheltered nook on deck, he turned to me with an air of sudden resolve. "Anne," he said, "I must tell you something which perhaps you ought to have known in the beginning. I am not always a foundry-man — nor a steerage passenger. I am a teacher, Anne; I try to teach young men — yes, and young women too — the truth about God's plan for us in this world. And in order to do this I have tried living in many ways and

in many places. That is why I went to England this summer. I wanted to study the English working-man — as I had studied the American working-man — closer at hand. I wanted to find out many things which I did not know about his thoughts and his ways.”

I was listening in breathless silence.

“My name,” he went on, with a queer little half-smile, “is William Brown. People sometimes call me Dr. William Rutherford Brown, Anne. I am said to teach sociology and ethics at Harvard University. You don’t mind, do you, Anne? I did not mean to deceive you, dear.”

“And you married me!” I faltered, quite overcome by the greatness of his love. “You loved — me, a poor, ignorant, foolish servant-maid?” For all this time he had curiously taken it for granted that I was Aunt Nugent’s maid.

“I married — my wife,” he said slowly, in that wonderful voice of his which still vibrates in the depths of me with an almost intolerable joy. “You are mine, Anne. Nothing else matters — nothing. Nothing shall ever come between us again.” He said this with an air of stern finality

as if putting down for the last time some teasing inward doubt.

“Then you will forgive — me,” I faltered, “when I tell you that I am not always a servant; I am that unhappy rich woman I told you of. And, oh, dear foundry-man, I have n’t given my money away yet. I did n’t know how to do it alone. But you will help me.”

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